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MONTHLY MAGAZINE

January 1908

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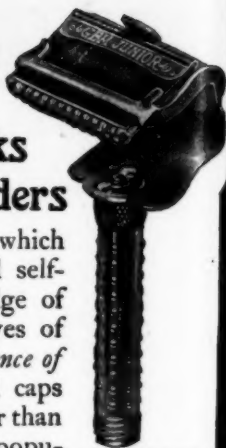
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LIPPINCOTT'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE

JANUARY, 1908



THE DUCHESS OF DREAMS

BY EDITH MACVANE

Author of "The Adventures of Joujou," etc.

I.

IT was in Pau, one spring, that Mrs. J. Harrison Rumbold had made the acquaintance of the Grand Duchess Varvara.

A period of intimacy which, though spasmodic, was not wholly one-sided, had followed their meeting. For, "Sacred blue, my angel!" the Grand Duchess had cried in answer to the mild remonstrances of a relative of hers, a minor German royalty—"Sacred blue," (for the imperial Varvara, like other highly-placed personages, often took advantage of her exalted station, to use language more violent than polite,) "my angel, what would you? She amuses me, this red-skin! And for us other poor Russians, born *ennuyées*, is it not sufficient recommendation for a new friend, that she chases away our boredom? Moreover, she has asked me to visit her, in the virgin-forest of America. And should a kind Heaven ever terminate the sufferings of my poor Alexieff, and should I ever be able, by craft or by audacity, to escape from my post at court and my wearisome prison of Lithuania—then

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crac! you shall see me and my sapphires on the *Cinquieme Avenue!*" And the Grand Duchess, with a snap of her sparkling blue eyes, lit a cigarette from her turquoise-studded case, and blew faint, meditative rings of pleased anticipation.

The next year a group of enterprising Moscow Nihilists had played directly into Mrs. Rumbold's hand by tossing one of their favorite missiles at the elderly grand duke, on the occasion of his Easter visit to their city. A twelvemonth later his youthful widow had announced her intention of touring the globe—a plan which, as her married life had been one of strict retirement and attendance on her husband's infirmities, had evidently not been opposed at imperial headquarters. Mrs. Rumbold, reading the tiny item in the Russian column of the *London Times*, had seen her opportunity and grasped at it.

Armed with the acceptance which the Grand Duchess by return flash of cable sent back to her, she proceeded to take the Newport world by storm. With the aid and advice of Mr. Willy Lushington, her social mentor and factotum, and backed by her husband's uncounted millions, she issued invitations for an entertainment in honor of Her Imperial Highness—invitations which were eagerly accepted by the delectable Newport circle which had previously snubbed the little upstart. Even the great Mrs. Borridaile, its acknowledged leader, had signified her intention of honoring the affair with her presence. When Mrs. Rumbold received the last-named acceptance, together with that of the rising young diplomat, Jack Borridaile, the great lady's nephew and heir, and the coronetted scrawl of Prince Debreczin, her noble Hungarian guest, the ambitious hostess surveyed these symbols of triumph solemnly, as Alexander may have been supposed to regard his wreath of bays.

As a crowning honor, only the day before the arrival of the expected princess on the Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse, Mrs. Rumbold received an afternoon call from Mrs. Borridaile herself.

The chatelaine of Stormcliff (the large Græco-Renaissance pile which "Gentleman Jim" Rumbold's money had erected between Bellevue Avenue and Narragansett Bay) was seated in the Italian garden, drinking tea. Plans for the forthcoming entertainment, acceptances, bills, etc., lay on the enormous silver tray between her and Mr. Lushington. Just at the moment, however, they were discussing a less agreeable topic—the annoying case of a young country girl to whom, during a visit at Bar Harbor last summer, Mrs. Rumbold had given a brief and gushing patronage, and whom she had urged to a city career and then, only naturally, forgotten. To have the young person take her encouragement as serious, to have her come to New York last winter to claim a fulfilment of Mrs. Rumbold's profuse and airy promises—that was surely unreasonable enough; but now, at this breath-

lessly interesting moment, "Back she comes," cried Mrs. Rumbold, "as bad pennies always do!"

Mr. Lushington glanced over the tremulous little scrawl which Mrs. Rumbold had handed him for inspection. "She seems to have had rather a hard time," he observed languidly. "Sick, and no work, and no money—deuced unpleasant, you know!"

"I dare say," retorted Mrs. Rumbold, in a tone of strong displeasure; "but I don't see why I should be held responsible for it, simply because I told her she had only to come to New York and she would leap at once into the first rank of living actresses. Well, I'm sure I was sincere—why should n't she? She was a pretty little thing, that I won't deny, with yellow hair down to her ankles. And she had talent, too—that Sunday school stage lit up, I can tell you, when she came out with her imitations and her little French songs. You see, she was the daughter of somebody's French governess, who ever so long ago had run away from Bar Harbor and married a fisherman. So, altogether, I was interested in the girl, you see. I may have made some nonsensical promises, perhaps, that if she'd come to New York I'd see that she made the theatrical success she was fitted for. You know how one talks sometimes."

"And the goose took you seriously?" cried Mr. Lushington, with ready sympathy.

Mrs. Rumbold's nod expressed her contempt for the whole business. "Willy, you'll have to see her and settle with her. She's waiting now. Angélique Hooper, that's her name. Wait—here's her letter. Offer her a hundred cash—a thousand—I don't care. But get rid of her, there's a dear boy, before the Grand Duchess arrives. And, heavens! there's a motor now!"—as the shriek of an approaching machine was heard from the road that wound below the terrace. "Some one come to take tea," added Mrs. Rumbold, with satisfaction. "I wonder who can it be!"

In a moment her soul nearly fainted within her for satisfaction; for in the three figures escorted by green-coated footmen over slopes of velvety lawn she recognized no other than Mrs. Borridaile, her nephew Jack, and the celebrated prince from Buda-Pesth, who was honoring the American summer with his presence. For the first time, perhaps, Mrs. Rumbold recognized the supreme success of her Grand Duchess campaign; but her carefully trained eyes betrayed no surprise and no delight beyond that of the well-bred hostess. With her blonde head a little on one side, she gushed at her callers, with perfect taste.

"Dear Mrs. Borridaile, this is so charming of you! And you, Prince, what a pleasure! Charles, place chairs. Mr. Borridaile, I am delighted to see you. Now sit down, all of you, please, and let me give you some tea!"

With a hand that almost trembled with pleasure, the hostess dispensed her offered refreshment—tea made, in deference to the expected guest, in a large brass samovar, then served in glasses and sweetened with rum instead of cut sugar.

"But, Willy, if you *must* see that—er—young person about that—er—business, we will spare you just for one moment." She turned toward her able assistant with a glittering smile of meaning. With a bow, he departed. Mrs. Rumbold turned back to her guests.

"So you are coming to my dance on Wednesday night, are n't you?" she said—"for my little friend from Russia? Now, you know, I think that is so dear of you!"

"The Grand Duchess Varvara," mused Prince Debreczin thoughtfully—"I met her husband over at Monte Carlo—the Grand Duke Alexieff—and a brute he was, with stick-out ears. But I never met the lovely Varvara herself—her elderly husband kept her rather close, I fancy. Besides that, she was ill with heart trouble, they said—fainting fits and that sort of thing."

The Prince, a tall, lean-shouldered man, with beautifully finished ears and feet, placed his aristocratic finger-tips together and smiled at the assemblage. His manners were charming, but the lines about his heavy-lidded eyes were many and enigmatic. At his last observation, Mrs. Borridaile smiled her dignified, middle-aged smile.

"Poor little soul!—it seems time that she began to enjoy life at last! And how long, Mrs. Rumbold, did you say that she intends to honor Newport with her presence?"

Mrs. Rumbold smiled exultantly. "A month, no less than a month, she promises faithfully."

"Ah!" Mrs. Borridaile smiled in return. "We must try and make the time pass pleasantly for her"—at this "we" in the mouth of the august lady before her Mrs. Rumbold's frame experienced an agreeable tingle—"even if we can't speak her language with her! But I suppose at least you will have the Russian ambassador here to meet her, shall you not?"

Mrs. Rumbold was effusively regretful. "That's our one stroke of adversity," she gushed, with a very becoming little sigh. "You know he was a great friend of my duchess's father, and used to trot her on his knee; and as he has never seen her since, I thought it would be such a charming reunion for them. But, by bad luck, the poor count writes me that it would be quite against etiquette for him to come here to meet the members of the Japanese commission, and as they were already invited—oh, do excuse me, Mr. Borridaile!" She brought herself up short in sudden embarrassment. "I'm sure the presence of the American commissioners will more than atone, in itself, for the absence of the poor old ambassador!"

Jack Borridaile bowed politely, with a smile which showed his handsome teeth. He was, indeed, the American secretary of the international commission which was at that moment, with the importance of strict secrecy and much free advertising, sitting at Newport to negotiate the new American-Japanese treaty. The combination of brains, energy, and other desirable qualities which he presented caused him, it was generally said, to be looked on with special favor at Washington; and his aunt made no scruple of declaring openly that she expected some day to visit him at St. James.

The Hungarian smiled at him. "To say nothing," he said, "of the honorable secretary! Yes, I am sure that no one will miss the poor ambassador, except it be the poor little Russian, who might like to find some one to talk her dreadful native tongue with her!"

Borridaile looked up in some surprise. "But you, Prince," he said—"I thought that you knew your way around among the *ovskies* and the *vitches*!"

"I? Not a word!"—the Prince was quick in his denial. "We Hungarians, you must know, hate and fear Russia. As for myself, I have never set foot within her boundaries."

"But I thought," said Mrs. Rumbold in disappointment, "that you knew Alexieff."

Debreczin shrugged his angular shoulders. "The most formal acquaintance. At Monte Carlo we used to meet at the Prince of Monaco's private circle. But to know a Russian, as you yourself have doubtless observed, Madame Rumbold, is not necessarily to understand his barbarous tongue!"

Mrs. Rumbold nodded eagerly. "Certainly the dear Grand Duchess always spoke English with us at Pau, or sometimes French."

Down the long path, between rows of new exotic hollyhocks and tall Persian pinks, came Willy Lushington. Behind him, on a small gold salver, a green-liveried footman bore an envelope of light yellow paper. Mrs. Rumbold, carelessly picking up the message, smiled to hear the careless familiar greetings between her confidential manager and her new friends. At last they were all together, and she was arrived in the class to which she rightfully belonged! After six years of indomitable struggle, the field was hers at last.

She smiled triumphantly into Willy's face as he bent over her for a glass of tea. "Did you arrange the *h'm* and the *h'm k'm*?" she asked in a confidential aside.

Willy shook his head. "She refused pointblank to go off without seeing you," he answered in the same tone. "Thanks, a small slice of lemon in mine, please! She flew into such a rage when I offered her a check, that I had to promise that you would see her—just a moment will do, before dinner-time. Oh, I know it's unpleasant, but

there's no other way out. We can't have the park gate bombarded this way, you know."

Mrs. Borridaile, catching the last words, drew a droll face of commiseration. "Ah, the reporters!" she sighed in sympathy. "I can feel for you, Mrs. Rumbold. Last month, when monseigneur arrived, they were awful, and now it's your turn, you and your Grand Duchess! I saw a little yellow-haired person, in a raglan and a brown veil, lurking about your lodge when we drove in. The Prince was so amused!"

Debreczin laughed. "Before I had landed from the *Deutschland*," he said, "there was a swarm of them up the gang-plank with their red note-books, asking me my opinion of the country. So I can't help thinking that it's my turn now, you see, to amuse myself with them! So I made them stop the auto at the gate here, and I began to ask the veiled lady her impressions of Newport."

"Oh, Prince!" Mrs. Rumbold gushed with polite laughter; Jack Borridaile frowned slightly, while the Hungarian proceeded.

"But this turning of the tables, you see, did not please her ladyship at all! She showed me her back and began to walk away. Monsieur Jack began to call me names, and, altogether, my attempts at journalism were not a success at all," finished the Prince in an aggrieved tone; then, turning to Mrs. Borridaile: "But for the future, now that I am avenged on the tribe, I promise to behave. *Voilà!*"

"You should have cheated the tribe in the first place," observed Mrs. Rumbold, "like my little Grand Duchess. She is crossing incognito, you see, as plain madame, and with a very small suite. It is really the only way, you see, to travel with any comfort. Will you pardon me if I glance at this message, please?"

With a languid hand and a nodded apology to Mrs. Borridaile, Mrs. Rumbold opened the yellow telegram which still lay on the table beside her. Around the table the merry chatter of the tea-drinkers grew and gathered. Nobody noticed that the hostess's face as she read turned a curious violet-gray under her maquillage, and that the yellow paper rattled unsteadily in her hand.

Then she raised her eyes, with an airy and resolute smile.

"I have here," she said slowly, "the Nantucket wireless from my dear Varvara. Her ship docks at Hoboken at half past seven o'clock to-morrow morning. And as soon as she is done with the customs, we breakfast together on the Lotus."

II.

In the glittering pleasure-house which Mr. Rumbold's millions (combined with the enterprise of Willy Lushington and the taste of a French designer) had erected in the Italian gardens on the terrace of Stormcliff, the dance of Wednesday night was in full swing.

"But it is like our ice-palaces, that one builds in the winter on the frozen Neva!" the Grand Duchess had cried in admiration when she had first entered the pavilion, and the delighted company had murmured their assent. The erection before them was indeed a remarkable imitation of an ice-palace—a huge dome, maintained by a silver framework and built of frosted glass, shining with crystals, sparkling with artfully concealed electric lights. The floor, laid flat for dancing, was made of some polished white wood that shone smooth as ice. Spreading out in every direction from the central dome were mimic cloisters, caverns, and delightful little labyrinths, whose ways wound among a delightful confusion of snowy pillars and glittering stalagmites. Here and there in this arctic wilderness were set pale-green pools fed by splashing fountains. Even to a fancy less newly exalted than that of Mrs. Rumbold, the illusion might well have been given of the Snow Queen's palace and its mistress, as before a grotto of sparkling crystals and festooned green leaves stood a slender, black-haired figure, jewelled, blooming, and exquisite—her Imperial Highness, the Grand Duchess Varvara.

Behind her Highness, splendid and extremely warm in the fierce barbarism of his native costume, stood a huge Cossack servant; and beside her, thrusting his long nose forward for occasional notice from the slender, white-gloved hand, a tall, silver-coated wolf-hound added the last touch of picturesqueness to her appearance. Little Mrs. Rumbold, in a cloth-of-gold dress and an enormous diamond tiara, looked like an overdressed school-girl standing beside her.

Unconscious of the jostling, chattering crowd, Jack Borridaile stood staring at the beautiful Russian with the unconscious delight of a school-boy. Never before in his life, he reflected with a smile, had he seen so complete a realization of the dream princess on the frontispiece of his childhood's fairy book; the divinity to whom, in those far-away days, he had dedicated all his secret adoration. Her gown, artfully woven of some gauzy silver cloth, defined the curving slenderness of her delicate shape, and fell heavily about her feet in a dragging border of bright sequins and clustering seed pearls. On her breast glittered a galaxy of jewelled orders, and among the curling shadows of her hair there sparkled like hoar frost a little coronet of diamond stars.

So far the details of her appearance were thoroughly Western and Parisian; but at the sight of the jewelled chains which clasped her long thick throat and hung down over the milky perfection of her bosom, Jack recalled, with a sudden little vague chill, the despotic, half-Eastern royalty from whom she was sprung. Both in their value and in the fashion in which they were worn, those flashing stones emphasized the alien blood of their wearer, and the immeasurable height at which she was placed above any ordinary man who should presume

to fall victim to her beauty and her charm. All sapphires they were, huge, half-barbaric lakes of blue, square, oval, and hexagonal, strung together in curiously wrought links of platinum. As she moved, they rippled and sparkled from her throat to the hem of her dress, like a summer wave breaking over her. In all the world there could be nothing more gloriously, more triumphantly blue; except the two large eyes whose lustrous depths outmatched even the fire-pointed ultramarine of the gorgeous baubles below them.

With a throb of self-conscious remorse, Jack pulled himself away from his ill-timed devotions, to the various duties which claimed him. His petition for dances with the charming stranger had been rewarded, by her bustling hostess, with the promise of a waltz at the far end of the evening. And until that happy moment the hours of dancing, of supper, and finally of the intricate baby-games of the cotillion, wore along (to one guest, at least) interminable and endless.

And yet the cotillion was universally owned to be brilliant and striking above the ordinary. Two or three of the figures indeed, it was whispered by the leader, Mr. Lushington, to his occasional partners, were of the Grand Duchess's own proposing, and were danced here at the pavilion of Stormcliff exactly as they had been by the Russian court last summer at Tsarskoe Selo. These innovations—the dance of the Snow Crystals, the Circus of the Wolves, and the Tartar Charge—passed off with quite a brilliant success. At the many compliments showered upon the Grand Duchess for her delightful ideas, she laughed and showed her large white teeth in a glistening line against the soft crimson of her lip.

"Look," said Jack's partner to him, as they sank into their seats after their final turn in the fantastic whirl. Jack's partner, curious to say, was by the caprice of fate (and the artful manipulations of her affectionate mother) no other than Mrs. Rumbold's daughter Letty. She wore a gown of one kind of lace over a slip of another kind of lace, and at least two pounds of white Ceylon pearls suspended around her pink neck. She sat in perfect contentment sipping a sorbet between the claims of the dance (Letty was fond of eating) and fancying herself irresistible.

"Look," she said, "there's somebody arriving—a nice old gentleman with lots of stars. Do have a sorbet, Mr. Borridaile! You won't? But I must finish mine just the same. Look, there's mamma bowing to him. I wonder why does she look so ill?"

The next moment Letty was sitting alone with her ice, for an energetic young matron in pink satin, looking about for some one upon whom she might bestow a large green jade monkey with ruby eyes, had pounced upon Jack and carried him off. Between the exertion of replying to her congratulations on the subject of Letty, and of

attending to the slippery green animal which she affectionately insisted upon carrying with them in the waltz, he managed to put his foot through her chiffon flounces and almost to collide with Prince Debreczin and his imperial partner.

"There," said Mrs. Marsten frankly, "that was all my fault—but I'm glad of it, for now here's an excuse to stop a moment by Mrs. Rumbold and have a good stare at the Grand Duchess when she comes back. She's quite lovely, you know, she and those sapphires of hers! You watch and wait—inside of a week there won't be a sapphire left, for love or dollars, in the city of New York, and the price of blue glass will go so high that we shall have to pay double for our Bromo-Seltzer. But *I* am not going to be left behind, you can be sure. I've been back to the villa already, for a long-distance chat with my little Tiffany man in his suburban home—to tell him to hold all the sapphires in the shop till I can get down to the city to-morrow afternoon!"

"Yes, they are sapphires, aren't they," responded Jack, with as much indifference as he could assume, "that our Imperial Highness is wearing?"

Mrs. Marsten's frank lips relaxed into an unmistakable grin. "Don't be a humbug, Jack!" she said; then with a sudden exclamation: "Look there, Jack, do you know who that is that has just arrived? The Russian ambassador—I've seen him in Washington. And oh, isn't he wearing the loveliest plaques and cordons that ever you saw?"

Whatever were the decorative qualities of his Excellency's decorations, Jack did not observe; for just at that moment he saw the Grand Duchess, on the Hungarian's arm, approaching their side of the glittering grotto.

"Yes, madame," the ambassador was observing to Mrs. Rumbold, who, as her daughter had remarked, looked suddenly pinched and wan beneath her battlemented tiara of glittering brilliants, "when I heard that her Imperial Highness had actually arrived I decided to waive the purely formal objections of which I wrote you." For one instant his near-sighted eyes glared with undiplomatic hatred through their glasses at a twinkling little Japanese dancing past with the daughter of the house; then turning back to his hostess with a bow: "So I found myself unable to resist this opportunity to pay my homages to you, madame, and to her Imperial Highness. When she was a child I knew her parents well; and the late Grand Duke, her husband, was my oldest friend."

Smiling, bright-eyed, with the excitement of the dance painting her carmine cheeks, Varvara paused before them. For an instant, as the ambassador turned to greet her, there was an awkward pause of a curious length and tensivity. The Hungarian glanced from one to the other. On his arm Jack felt a slight and significant pinch from his

observant partner. Then, in a voice oddly dry and toneless, the hostess spoke.

"Princess," she said slowly, with a little laugh, "if such a formality be necessary, I have the honor to present to you your own ambassador!" And with a deep obeisance, the newcomer bent low over the unsteady little hand which the Grand Duchess extended to him. For that her hostess's emotion had extended itself to her, there could be no doubt; from her cheeks and lips the bright color had flown, and her large eyes shone blue-black against the whiteness of her face. Then, in a strong and evident effort at self-command, she spoke with an appealing dignity.

"Prince," she said, "for the honor which you pay me in coming to-night, I beg you to accept my thanks. Believe me, I bring you every expression of esteem from his Imperial Majesty!"

What compliments his Excellency murmured in reply Jack could not distinguish; his chief emotion at the time being, indeed, a lively desire to punch the head of the starred and ribboned individual whose presence seemed to cause his adorable princess so much pain. Her next words, however, were more reassuring, as, with one hand laid lightly on her hostess's arm, the Grand Duchess turned back to the waiting diplomat.

"I see, Prince," she said, with a little laugh, "we may as well take you into our confidence. For, confess you knew it already! I cannot deny I am here as a truant. Promise you will not betray me to his Majesty my cousin—at any rate, not to-morrow!"

She laughed again, but her face betrayed her anxiety. With a little shrill titter of relief, Mrs. Rumbold echoed her guest's plea to the smiling ambassador, who turned with a silky gesture of his long, slender hands.

"Ah, madame," he said deprecatingly, "I beg you, have no fear of my loyalty to you! For"—and his voice trailed off into strange purring syllables of some unknown tongue, with sputtering sibilants and strangely vibrating gutturals.

The Grand Duchess listened attentively, while in sudden helplessness the hostess turned her white face from one guest to another. The little silver whistle blew, Jack's moment of liberty had expired, but he stood immovable, his jaw dropped in amazement; for before his eyes, the calm dignity of the Grand Duchess collapsed like a toy-balloon beneath the inquiring pin of its youthful owner; and, burying her white face in her hands, she sank with a little cry upon the divan behind her. Her great wolf-hound, springing forward, licked her concealing fingers with a plaintive caress of his long pink tongue.

"Madame, madame, what have I done?" inquired the ambassador in the startled accents of real dismay. What he had said in that strange tongue, so to harrow and distress his solitary hearer, Jack could not

divine. His indignation was, however, forced to restrain itself, and the hostess glanced in equal silence at the bent figure before them.

With a heroic effort, Jack turned to rejoin his waiting partner. Suddenly the Grand Duchess raised her face, with a wet and charming smile. "Forgive me," she said in little broken accents, "but it is long since I have heard my native tongue. . . . And you see those were the last words he said, my poor Alexieff, to the Governor of Moscow that morning. . . . And it brought it all back . . . the terrible scene on the steps of the Kremlin."

"My poor darling!" burst out Mrs. Rumbold, with a sudden gush of vociferous pity. And as the bystanders rushed with fans, and glasses of champagne, and good advice, Jack turned with his green monkey and walked dutifully back to the impatient Letty. The poor little Grand Duchess was on the road to recovery, it seemed; and at all events, the cotillion was drawing to a close, and the next dance—the dance of the evening!—belonged to him.

III.

To the seductive strains of the "*Amoureuse*" the glittering crowd swayed and whirled in more or less perfect rhythm. The air, heavy with the scent of the dying roses, bore also the burden of sauce tartare, roasted plover, and the keen bouquet of Veuve Cliquot. "It's so warm, sacred blue!" remarked Jack's partner plaintively. "Yes, it is warm to boil your tea on the ceiling! Should you think it very bizarre and very unconventional of me, monsieur, if I suggested a few moments of fresh air?"

To this proposal Jack assented, as he would have agreed to a voyage to the moon, suggested by the same lips. And accordingly, a few moments later, they walked together over the half-lit terrace, toward the rustling vines of the pergola. The glittering palace of crystal, with its babel of tongues and its blaring violins, seemed miles, centuries, away. From the corner of his eyes, Jack glanced at the silver-white figure, with the slim and ghostly dog at its hand, which walked beside him in the star-lit darkness.

"Princess," he said suddenly, "tell me—have n't I seen you before?"

For an instant her white figure swayed against the dark embowering trellis, and he heard her light breath come and go. Was it a return of her recent illness or had he by unlucky chance said something to distress her? "Madame!" he cried, springing forward with real concern and trouble in his honest voice. The Grand Duchess waved him aside with one white arm.

"Nothing, nothing!" she said quickly. "My foot caught in a tangled spray of vine, that was all. This darkness is confusing. If

you will allow me, I will take your arm, monsieur. And now, monsieur, tell me when it was you saw me, and where?"

"I don't know," answered Jack happily, as he looked down at the little hand, white upon his arm. "Yes—that is, of course I know. I saw you first, madame, about twenty-four years ago."

She gasped. "Twenty-four years, monsieur! But I was only a baby then!"

"And I," responded Jack, with answering gravity—"I was not quite so tiny then, perhaps; but I own it was not as a baby, madame, that I had the privilege of seeing you! No, better than that, I had a fairy book to which I was much attached, and the frontispiece was a beautiful colored print, a picture of the lady whom the prince discovered sleeping in the frozen palace. I would rather have died, I think, than own it; but in my secret thoughts I took that lady for *my* lady. And now, Princess"—he hesitated a moment—"whether I look at you or at the absurd little picture that I have carried for so many years in the inmost disk of my brain, I see the same eyes and the same smile and the same coronet of stars."

"And the same frozen palace—don't forget the frozen palace, monsieur!"

He paused, then responded recklessly:

"Yes, the frozen palace, where the princess slept. But don't you see, madame, when the prince came—the princess woke up?"

He paused, frightened at his own daring. Why was it that his heart stirred—stirred like a shy school-boy at his first shrine—as he listened for her reply?

"But you see, monsieur," the Grand Duchess observed, "I have been awake all the time!" She paused, and with a sudden effort dragged the conversation back to its original subject. "This paragon of ladies in your picture-book, monsieur," she said lightly—"was she Russian, I wonder, and what was her name?"

The wistful frankness of her tone left him no room to suspect her of coquetry; so with equal simplicity he answered her:

"Yes, of course she was Russian; why not? And the name printed in large gilt letters below her picture was as pretty as your own—"The Duchess of Dreams."

"'The Duchess of Dreams'!" she echoed, looking at him out of startled eyes; then with a laughing intake of breath, and pausing with a gesture of sudden solemnity, "When we look at the sea," she went on slowly, "moving so softly there below us, and the quiet stars overhead . . . what are we, any of us, czar or millionaire, grand duke or grand duchess, but dreams, little empty, feeble dreams? Yes, monsieur, you may call me that if you choose—the Duchess of Dreams!"

Her voice died away in lingering cadences of ineffable sadness, as

she leaned out, like a plummy white bird in the darkness, over the iron balustrade, toward the murmuring sea. Jack, standing silent beside her, could not see her face; but from her tone he fancied, in a quick flight of remembrance, that her face was pale as it had been just now in the presence of the ambassador, and her blue eyes dark with unshed tears; and with a quick, wrenching pang of suddenly born jealousy, which amazed him with its bitterness and its sudden revelation of his real sensations—in quick, grudging jealousy, his mind flew back to the vanished Grand Duke, whose title but just now had been on her lips. He was dead, it was true, this man who had once possessed her; but his identity lived on, of necessity, in her; and his memory, after two years' widowhood, survived in her heart with sufficient vividness to call out the painful emotion which he himself had witnessed no more than a half-hour ago.

The dog beside her, a slender white were-wolf in the shadows, whimpered lightly and rubbed his long nose in his mistress's hand. She turned back with a little start and a quick change of tone.

"My poor Vassily! Is he bored, my *chéri*? Come, monsieur, I think our dance must be at an end, and my partners wait. Come, monsieur!"

She turned with a sweep of her pale silver drapery and a tinkle of her hanging sapphire chains. Jack sprang forward; almost in spite of himself, it seemed to him, his hand touched hers. "Wait, madame." And her changing face, as it turned itself once more to him, was again tremulous and overcast. Then, putting out her hand in a sudden impulse which seemed to overmaster her and in spite of herself to twist the words from her unwilling lips,

"Ah, monsieur," she said, "if you could know what it is, when one is very far from home, and troubled, and filled with fears of this big, lonely world—if you could know what it is to see one friendly face!"

A quick step sounded on the gravelled walk behind them. "Madame," cried a well known voice, "pardon me that I intrude. But how could I forget my privilege of my promised dance?"

The Hungarian, bowing low, offered his arm for the Grand Duchess's acceptance. The light from the pavilion lit up his handsome, high-featured face and the collar of the Golden Fleece which sparkled at his neck. The great white dog, yawning and stretching himself, ran up and followed his mistress.

Jack Borridaile, with a low bow which concealed the rage in his face, turned toward the marble staircase. The imperial Varvara waved her hand in an airy leavetaking.

"Good-night, monsieur!" she cried. "Or is it good-morning? For there is the dawn coming up over the sea." Then, turning to her newly-arrived partner, "Shall we return to the pavilion, Prince?"

she asked lightly. Then as she encountered the glance of his dark, heavy-lidded eyes, she shrank suddenly, almost imperceptibly, away. His outstretched hand detained her.

"Not yet, Princess!"—his words, though smilingly uttered, had the sudden keen force of a command. "For first, you see, we are going to have a few words together, you and I!"

IV.

DEBRECZIN'S first words were, however, of no obviously terrifying tenor. "I am indeed glad, Princess," he observed courteously, "to see that you are so soon recovered from your recent faintness. I remember, that spring at Monte Carlo, how your poor husband disquieted himself over those heart attacks of yours. Often and often has he described to me how you would sink down with your lips so blue, *mon Dieu!* as your own sapphires. To-night, however, I recognize none of these alarming symptoms—I congratulate you, madame!"

The Grand Duchess stood silent, fingering the petals of a rose on the wall by which she stood. Then, as though with an effort,

"Mrs. Rumbold had not understood from you yesterday, monsieur," she said slowly, "that you were on such friendly terms with—with my poor husband as your present words would imply."

"Nor had I understood—forgive me, madame," rejoined the Prince quickly—"that your Imperial Highness was on such friendly terms with his Imperial Highness, your lamented husband, as your recent emotional attack at the recalling of his memory would imply!"

Varvara drew herself up in indignant amazement. "I think, monsieur," she said coldly, "that you forget yourself!"

He fixed her smilingly with his eye. "No, Princess," he said slowly, "I forget nothing—neither myself nor the Grand Duke Alexieff nor your charming self, madame! My memory, if I may boast it so, is usually reckoned infallible; a voice heard in passing, a face whirled by in an automobile—these airy trifles remain forever indelibly fixed upon my brain. But pardon me"—he interrupted his own words with a laugh—"that I thus discourse on my own peculiarities. Do I bore you, madame?"

Varvara stood silent. He repeated his question. She turned toward him eyes which shone cold and luminous in the half-lit darkness.

"Yes," she said, "you bore me. Shall we dance, monsieur? It will be the last dance of the night."

The Prince laughed softly, as though her sharp words had been subtle flattery. "But you allowed Monsieur Borridaile the privilege of ten minutes on the terrace, Princess," he insisted. "Is he, then, so much more favored than I?"

"Since frankness is the fashion—yes," she answered deliberately.

Again the Prince laughed. "Bravo, madame! For the young man's sake, I am glad to hear it. My poor friend Jack!—I have watched him this evening; he is not one who readily falls in love. But this evening—ah!" With a delicate gesture he kissed his finger-tips. "I congratulate you, madame; you have won a life-long slave—a faithful and valuable slave."

The Grand Duchess's fingers scattered the rose petals in pale showers around her. Indignation, horror of the soft-voiced man beside her, caught at her breath and stiffened the muscles of her flying fingers; but down beneath anger and wounded dignity the insolent words of Debreczin had struck from her heart a strange pang of a new and secret delight. With a curious hesitation in her manner she turned back to her tormentor.

"And now, monsieur," she said in a low voice, "have you insulted me long enough, or shall we return to the ball-room?"

"Madame!"—the Prince's air was filled with a grieved astonishment. "Insult you? I assure you such was not my intention. Blame it rather upon this insipid French language that we talk together, so"—his supple tongue melted in soft feline cadences as he leaned toward the white-clad, shrinking figure.

He ceased. The Grand Duchess was silent. He spoke again. She turned with a little fluttering laugh.

"And why," she asked quickly, "am I expected to understand Hungarian?"

For a moment their eyes encountered and clashed in the twilight; then, "Princess," rejoined Debreczin slowly, "the language that I spoke was Russian!"

She flung up her head with the triumph of one who finds her answer ready. "But, sacred blue, monsieur!—only yesterday you assured Madame Borridaile you understood no word of Russian!"

"Certainly," he replied with smiling candor; "that is what I said and what I would say again. It is, you see, imperatively demanded by my position that I disown all acquaintance and connection with things Russian. The country, the language, are not only unknown but hostile to me. The Russian service? It does not exist. The Grand Duke Alexieff? I once called red or black with him at Monte Carlo. For the rest, I am a prince of the Dual Empire, immensely respected, drawing an enormous revenue from my vast wheat lands in Eastern Hungary. Ah, *mon Dieu!*"—his tones broke off in the accents of a profound self-pity. "If I had never met the Grand Duke Alexieff, madame!"

"I think," retorted the Russian coldly, "that I may echo that wish, monsieur!"

"Shall we sit down?" Nearby stood a carved stone bench (fetched

by Mrs. Rumbold at fabulous expense from a decayed Italian villa). Unwilling, as though compelled to surrender by an inward force stronger than inclination, the Grand Duchess sank down upon the indicated seat. With a deprecating gesture, the Prince seated himself at her side.

"You are right, Princess," he retorted in answer to her last words, "for your own sake, perhaps; for mine, beyond all doubt or question. We played together, Alexieff and I, first roulette and then baccarat. I played—the weakness is in my blood—like a madman. He played like a consummate artist. His reputation, as you know, spread over Europe. The result of our week's play together, however"—he took in a long breath—"was *not* spread through Europe—no, it leaked not even over Monte Carlo!"

The Grand Duchess moved restlessly upon her seat. What was to be the outcome of these monstrous, unsought confidences? "You lost, monsieur?" she asked indifferently.

He laughed shortly. "I lost? You the wife of Alexieff, and yet you don't *know* the fate of all that played with him? He had brains, I own it. Gambler, soldier, statesman—ah! if he had been Czar! I might then have kept my estates, perhaps—but as the case stood I played with him and lost—everything! A whole province of Hungary, madame, my funded property in the Bank of France, the jewels that were to be my wife's when I should marry—such payment was obviously impossible. So, to redeem my possessions, I sold myself to him—myself, body and soul."

The Grand Duchess turned. A sudden fear was in her eyes. "What do you mean?" she asked quickly.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Again, Princess—you the wife of Alexieff, and yet do not know that he, alone of all the Grand Dukes, was deep in the secret statesmanship and crooked policy of Russia? Ordinary tools for his service—professional spies, adventuresses, noblemen publicly ruined and degraded—there were ready enough to his hand. But a prince of royal descent, whose name and possessions might seem to warrant him as incorruptible—such an instrument was worth his own price. So at the price of my own estates and revenues, Alexieff bought me. At his death, my incriminating notes-of-hand were passed on to Pobydonestieff. At *his* death—*mon Dieu!* large as the amount may be, it sometimes seems to me that I have more than earned it already!"

"So you act," asked the Grand Duchess bluntly, "as spy for our government?"

He made a gesture of putting aside the ugly word with his hand. "As Russian agent, madame! I confess the work is not without its exhilarations. At Algeciras, for instance, the balking of the German

policy—all my work, Princess! And now I am sent here to Newport——”

He paused for a moment. The Princess's eyes, touched with contempt and a curious fear, were on him. “To look after me?” she asked with a delicately-edged insolence.

He bowed. “Undoubtedly that will be one of my most pleasing avocations; but my serious purpose, madame——” He leaned forward, to whisper in her shrinking ear. “This secret treaty that the Americans are making with Japan—we have reliable information, it defines the terms on which inviolability will be guaranteed to the Chinese frontier. The new alliance is aimed directly at Russia. It becomes absolutely necessary for the prosperity, for the very life, of our interests in the Far East, that we know the terms of this new contract. Do you follow me, madame?”

She nodded with the bewildered air of one who wades suddenly in waters unexpectedly deep. “You honor me with your confidence in so vital a matter, monsieur—and as a good Russian, I wish you success.”

“A thousand thanks, Princess!” His teeth flashed at her in a smile. “But I want, you see, more than your good wishes. I want your help.”

This time she turned, confronting him. “What do you mean?” she asked tersely.

“Listen!”—again he spoke cautiously in her ear. “Your new friend, Monsieur Borridaile, is, as you know, the secretary of the American commission. When I accepted the invitation of madame, his aunt, to make my home with them in Newport, I had, I own, certain scepticisms concerning the wisdom of the course; and I own that I am now baffled—balked by the too open door which lies before me. A guest's hands are, as you know, tied by the very privileges which he enjoys, by the obvious simplicity of the various means which lie ready to him. My utmost caution and astuteness show me no means to obtain the documents I need, without drawing on myself a plain suspicion which means my ruin; for one breath of suspicion attached to the name of Debreczin and *pouf!* I become a broken tool, useless for Russia's purpose, ruined. On the other hand, if I fail in my mission, I am ruined.” He took in a sharp breath that whistled between his lips. “You see my dilemma, Princess?” he asked slowly.

“It is a painful one,” she replied briefly.

“Painful,” he retorted, “but—this evening only have I perceived it—not insoluble. Madame, just now I told you I need your help. Here is the case, stated baldly: John Borridaile has a secret; John Borridaile is—or would be—your lover; I want you to win that secret from him.”

Varvara sprang to her feet. In the faint gray of approaching daylight, her beautiful face showed as colorless as the light itself. Her hands were clenched, her eyes blazed.

"What vile bargain do you propose to me, monsieur?" she asked in a tense whisper. "I to play for this young man's heart, to win his honest affection, and then betray him? Do you think that anything you could offer me, monsieur, could buy me to corruption such as this?"

With deliberation the Prince drew his cigarette-case from his pocket. "You will have one, Princess? Ah, I forgot, you smoke only the imperial make. But you will give me permission? A thousand thanks!" With the adroitness of one long used to play human souls, he allowed the cool-dropping instants of silence to fall on the flaming spirit of the woman before him. Then:

"In exchange I offer you, Princess, my silence. The cable message which I had intended to send this morning to my imperial master—I will not send it."

She surveyed him indomitably. "To the Czar—to call me home, you mean?"

"Since you put it that way, yes"—he smiled at her with the admiration of an adversary who can afford to be gallant. "The truant shall not be betrayed—she shall have her month of freedom and pleasure and—and love. But—she must pay for it."

"But suppose," she replied with an effort, "I do not care to buy! Suppose I withdraw from the game—suppose I leave Newport tomorrow!"

"In that case," replied the Prince, with dangerous suavity, "you lose your promised month, and your friend, Madame Rumbold—*eh bien*, she loses something more!"

The Grand Duchess started. This was a new aspect of the case. "Madame Rumbold," she said softly. "Very well, monsieur, if you make it her affair as well as mine——" Her large eyes brightened with a sudden idea. "Then if it is only money that is needed——"

The Prince drew himself up with a sudden indignant haughtiness which, all things considered, brought a fleeting smile to the white lips of Varvara. "I, madame—do you think that one of my blood is to be bought and sold with the gold of an American millionaire, like one of their own politicians?—even if the money, in buying back my notes-of-hand to Alexieff, could buy back my reputation, which my employers hold between their hands. No; exposure, nothing less, is the weapon which they hold always over me in case of failure." For a moment a bitter constriction passed over his dark, high-featured face. "Listen, madame!" he added suddenly.

She stood piteously. Listening was in every glance of her tortured

eyes, in her slender, shrinking form. From the Hungarian's voice and features as he confronted her, the courtly suavity dropped suddenly away as a poniard is plucked from its velvet sheath.

"Listen, Princess," he said. "The terms of the treaty I must know—my choice lies between that knowledge and ruin. You can win me that knowledge, so before you lies the same choice as mine. *Mon Dieu!*"—he broke off suddenly in the plaintive tones of self-pity—"if you think I enjoy the situation in which I am placed, if you think I find pleasure in the terms which I am obliged to make with you—But when ruin stares one in the face—ruin, do you understand? That is not a pretty word, either to you or to me. Come! I ask you no troublesome questions, you observe—I merely inquire, do you accept my terms? The party is breaking up, they will remark our absence. Come!" he cried again, as she continued to hesitate, "is it to be yes or no?"

Her eyes fell from his. Limply she sank down upon the cold carved stone of the bench. Through her tormented mind ran swift gray reflections of the past years of her life—years of stagnant monotony, of deadening restrictions, of a loneliness too forlorn to be endured even in retrospect. Was it to that dungeon that she must now return? That the radiant and mysterious influence which to-night for the first time had come into her life could by no possibility be prolonged beyond the present, no one knew better than herself. The barriers of rank, of deep-running worldly prejudices and age-old caste ideas, must make forever impossible for her the realization of such happiness as to-night had touched her with the edge of its wing.

But the month—the promised month of free, delightful life, illuminated now by the exquisite allurements of this new undreamed-of joy? The dull level of lonely sadness to which then her life must return—would it be made any more intolerable by the consciousness of the guilt which was hers?—while to the end of her life she would bear a heart enriched by the treasures of the remembered days. And yet—to betray him!

"I can't do it!" she gasped with dry lips. "You have no right to propose such a bargain to me. A traitress! For whom and for what, monsieur, do you take me?"

Through the blue rings of his cigarette smoke his dark eyes surveyed her steadily. For the first time there passed between them a glance of perfect understanding.

"You know, madame," he said softly, "for whom and for what I take you!"

There was a moment's pause. The Princess's face was quite white. She laughed recklessly.

"You are right, monsieur," she said. "Who am I, to cavil at the

terms you offer me? I agree, monsieur—here is my hand. I will do my best!”

Over her hand his eyes glinted with sudden tigerish ferocity. “Your best!” He sneered openly. “This is no question of your best. You must *do* it, do you understand? My employer accepts no excuse from me—I accept none from you. The terms of the Japanese treaty or—you know what, madame!”

She gathered her forces for a final word. “Here comes Mrs. Rum-bold. Tell me—out of your experience, can you give me a word of advice—how do I begin, how do I go to work?”

His answering smile cut with delicate two-edged meaning. “Princess, you are a beautiful woman—that is the beginning. Madame, you are a beautiful woman—that is the way you go to work!”

She shrank away from him to meet the smile of her hostess descending the marble steps, with Willy Lushington beside her.

“You naughty *chérie*, do you not know that every one is beginning to say good-night? Prince, you are a wretch to rob the Ice Palace of its queen. Are you not ashamed?”

The Prince bowed low in profession of his penitence; he bowed low enough, indeed, to hide the triumph that flamed from his heavy-lidded eyes.

V.

IN the large arm-chair by the open window, with her dark hair rolling like an inky stream over the white folds of her night-dress, sat the Grand Duchess Varvara. Her white dog was coiled at her feet, and her maid nodded sleepily over her, bathing her forehead with water of violets.

For the past hour the turrets of Stormcliff had been touched with the pallor of dawn and sunk in the silence of sleep; but from the girl by the window sleep had never seemed so far away. What was it he had said to her, this new friend with the brave outside and the clear, honest eyes?—“For when the prince came, you see, the princess woke up!”

Yes, that was true. From the sloth of egotism and vanity and unscrupulous self-seeking, she had waked up at last; only—there was the unspeakable horror of it—to sink, with eyes wide open, into depths of which she had never dreamed. Should she, after all, accept the conditions offered her by this Hungarian? Yes. . . . No. . . . The consequences of either answer cut through her thoughts like a whip. And through the confusion of these hurrying visions, like the new sun burning through the misty sea-rim below her, pierced and kindled the light of Jack Borridaile’s kind gray eyes.

There came a tap at the door, echoing with sinister oddness through the silence of the room. The maid opened the door, and in flew no

less a person than the mistress of the mansion herself, her slim shoulders covered with a long trailing negligee of flowered silk, her bare feet thrust in a pair of pink embroidered slippers.

"My dear Madame Rumbold! So you are sleepless, too! Pardon me if I rejoice at your misfortune, since it brings me so much happiness. Rose, place a chair."

Mrs. Rumbold smiled sweetly as she settled herself and her ruffles in the large blue damask chair which the maid wheeled up to her. For a moment the two ladies eyed each other, covertly but intently, while the maid shook the gold-topped perfume bottle (monogrammed, like all the other portable property in the room, with a large V and a crown) and with the wet handkerchief dabbled the white forehead beneath her hand.

"Poor little princess!" gushed Mrs. Rumbold, with profuse sympathy. Then with a sudden inspiration, "Perhaps her Highness will allow me, Rose," she said, "to bathe her head for a while. I have a gift for curing headache, a positive gift! For, as my poor James always says when he has one of his nervous attacks, in the touch of affection there is healing! You will allow me, Princess?"

With a smile the Grand Duchess watched her hostess as with bland insistence the latter took gold-topped bottle and handkerchief together from the hand of the sleepy maid, and bent her blonde head and flowery negligee over the chair of the fair sufferer.

"Will her Highness desire anything more?" inquired the maid, with a deferential yawn.

"No, Rose, you may go. I will take care of your mistress for a little while. There, dear Princess, that is better, is it not?"

The door closed behind the retreating servant. With little cat-like steps, Mrs. Rumbold gathered her pink flounces about her, and, flying to the door, she made sure that it was fastened. Then with a second thought she opened it very cautiously, to make certain that no listener stood concealed behind its panels. The other doors and the windows having been treated in the same way, she came back with leisurely steps to the blue damask arm-chair, and flung herself into it with a yawn. The perfumed handkerchief lay upon the rug, the gold-topped bottle distributed its essence to the hungry air; and the ministering hands of Mrs. Rumbold, clenched into lazy fists, were extended above her head in a long and comfortable stretch.

"Thank Heaven," she remarked piously, "for just one moment's rest! Upon my word, after the strain I've been through to-night, I wonder my face is n't cracked to bits. But we've done it—yes, we've done it!" Her whisper had the fervor of a shout; and as her slim fists came down from the air, she sprang to her feet with a sudden triumphant pirouette.

The girl in the chair, holding her aching head between her hands, surveyed her with wide-open, fixed eyes, filled with dumb suffering, like those of a dog.

"Ah!" cried Mrs. Rumbold again, "it has been a gorgeous success. To you, my dear Miss Hooper, I don't mind owning that to-night has made me—thanks to Mr. Rumbold and Mr. Lushington! Willy managed things rather cleverly the other day in New York, did n't he? The clothes and the jewels and Petroff—oh, Petroff, he *was* a stroke, and the wolfhound, too—to say nothing about the stars and orders from the pawn-shops, and all the books with the details about Russia! Yes, it was a busy day, and it has brought me good returns. Though, I must own, I have had the same feeling all the time that I had the day Jim and I climbed Vesuvius. We'd come pretty high, and everybody could see we were on the top, but who could tell what moment it would all crack and blow up under our feet? Well, it did n't. So as the worst is passed and vanquished, I think I may say our month is safe."

The girl surveyed her shrinkingly. "Yes," she said softly; "that was what I understood—one month."

Mrs. Rumbold nodded in reply. "After proclaiming it over the country, I can hardly make it less than the allotted time. And, after all, why not? I don't mind saying, after the success you've made to-night, that I'm not afraid to risk my social advancement on your performance. You have done splendidly, Miss Hooper, and Mr. Rumbold and I shall have the greatest satisfaction in handing you your check. I told you, you know, and now you see I was right, that you have a genius for the stage—a born actress, my dear, a born actress! And when you let the black out of your hair, and drop your French accent, there's really no reason why you should n't go on the stage in earnest. For the way you caught the royal air, you know, a little country girl like you—it was a wonder!—and the way you worked in your Russian allusions, out of your Tolstoi and Baedeker's—it could n't have been better.—Yes, I see now and more clearly, it was a special Providence that brought you to my door yesterday!"

The girl's smile was tinged with a faint bitterness. "Though perhaps," she answered slowly, "you did n't suspect it at the time."

Mrs. Rumbold shook her head with solemnity. "Which only shows, my dear, how inscrutable are the ways—well, but I'm free to own I was in despair! With that wretched cable from the Grand Duchess, telling me of her sudden illness—bad enough if it had arrived on time, but delayed two whole weeks by the censor in Petersburg—goodness gracious! what would have become of me if you had n't turned up? I should have been the laughing-stock of Newport—ruined, disgraced forever! It was a risky business, I own, but you've pulled it through,

and saved me. Yes, and when that wretched ambassador popped in to-night, after declaring he could n't come"—she stopped to gasp—"when all of a sudden in he walked, with his threats to report to Petersburg and his horrid, chattering Russian—I don't mind owning, Miss Hooper, that you saved the situation again. You might have knocked me over with a straw; I was helpless, just helpless. But the way you wriggled out of the whole fix, and made him look foolish instead of us—it was genius, positive genius!

"So I say, as *that* point is met and weathered, the rest of the month will be plain sailing. Because, after all, when you come to think of it, that dreadful ambassador was the only person in this continent who could possibly have given us away. As for the danger of the news getting back to Russia, and being contradicted there—who in Russia, I ask you, ever dreams of looking at an American newspaper? Especially the evening shockers, which are the only ones to print details about the Grand Duchess, you know. As for the Russian representatives of the Associated Press—well, I'll tell Mr. Rumbold to attend to *them*." She rose to her feet. "Good-night, my dear child!"

The girl put out her hand. "One moment, Mrs. Rumbold. I think it only honest to tell you——" She paused and wet her lips. Mrs. Rumbold surveyed her with suddenly quickened interest.

"What is it?" she said sharply.

"That man with the fat eyelids and the gold collar," answered the other wearily, "that Hungarian prince—he knows."

Mrs. Rumbold's little pink face went suddenly the color of ashes. She grasped the back of the chintz arm-chair for support. "But he told me," she said thinly, "that he knew nothing of Russia—that he had barely met Alexieff—that he had never laid eyes on the Grand Duchess Varvara!"

The girl smiled dully. "He had his own reasons for denying all knowledge of Russia," she answered, "and, as things have turned out, he has tricked you to some advantage to himself."

"What?" cried Mrs. Rumbold. "What? You mean that he——"

"I mean," answered the girl concisely, "that he offers to make terms, to—what do you call it?—compound the felony. He offers to keep silent if—if I——" Her tongue halted and stumbled. For the first time, it seemed to her, the full iniquitous depths of the proposed transaction lay fully revealed to her. An hour since, in her assumed character, it had been the treachery to a friend which had alone presented itself to her; now she began to realize, the treachery to her country was no less. She sat silent, sunk in the depths of self-aborrence. Yes, even to buy one month—one whole month—of the ineffable living joy which to-night had revealed to her, the price was too much to pay!

She was recalled to herself by Mrs. Rumbold's long-drawn laugh of relief. "Oh, so *that's* how the land lies? Thank Heaven we get off so easily!"

The girl glanced up quickly. Upon the unspoken meanings which laughed openly from Mrs. Rumbold's cynical green eyes, she felt herself shrivelling in a sudden wave of scarlet shame. Not till that moment had she suspected there were depths lower and more disgraceful than those to which she had already fallen. "No, no, madame," she said hoarsely; "I beg you to believe . . . it's not *that* he has asked of me!"

Her hostess's gaze was one of frank bewilderment. "Then what in the world——" she cried.

"It's—it's business," said the girl in painful accents; "certain information that he wants. He asked that I turn spy, traitress, for him——"

At the word "business" Mrs. Rumbold's delicate face sharpened itself as on sudden flint. "Not—not any of Mr. Rumbold's schemes?" she asked harshly. "Not the Pacific Steamship Combine or the B. & W. deal?"

The girl shook her head. "No—something quite outside the house, I assure you! But it's not worth mentioning, after all. I have made up my mind it's not worth buying immunity at such a price, and, with your permission, I'll disappear to-morrow."

Her tones trailed off in the accents of a profound despair. Then she turned with a little sharp exclamation of pain. Mrs. Rumbold's bony little hand had descended like a vise upon her bare shoulder.

"You're going to leave me in the lurch?" she breathed shrilly. "You're going to leave me at this man's mercy, to be ruined and made ridiculous in the eyes of the whole country? It's not that I'd be afraid of the Grand Duchess herself—she's a good-natured soul enough, and she'd appreciate the situation her cable left me in. But the newspapers—the American newspapers! You've got to stand by to save me from them, do you hear? It's you that has the price to buy his silence—whatever he asked of you, it's not as dishonorable as your betrayal of me would be. Promise you'll do your best—promise you'll stick by me—promise!"

Her fingers sank deep in the girl's soft flesh; but neither so deep nor so painfully as her words sank in her listener's mind. Her duty to Mrs. Rumbold!—this was a point which she must not forget.

Remembering the bitter determination of the Hungarian's threat, she could not doubt that her failure to meet his demands, whether by open refusal or by quiet disappearance, would be met by the same resentful use of the weapon he held in his hands. Not only she herself, but Mrs. Rumbold, the Rumbold name and position and soaring ambitions, lay

in the power of a desperate and unscrupulous man. Of the two evil rôles now presented to her by the comedy upon which she had so blithely entered, which was it her duty to choose? So far as consequences went, adroit handling of the business might save Borridaile from any calamitous results, even from any knowledge, of the betrayal of diplomatic secrecy. That solution of the trouble, difficult and risky though it surely was, was yet not impossible. Already and without her will, her fertile brain was spinning expedients. Moreover, her heart, still throbbing with the quick, cruel, exquisite elixir which the night's chance had distilled into it, cast its weight heavily in this side of the scale.

What right had she, after all, to become the instrument of disgrace and ruin to the woman who had trusted her?

With a sudden resolution, she lifted her blue eyes to the steely gaze that flamed down into hers.

"You are right, madame," she said, with a little shake in her voice. "I'll do my best, I promise you."

"Ah!" Mrs. Rumbold relaxed in sudden relief. "Then *that's* settled. I don't ask you what the Prince wants you to find out, because it's probably something dangerous, and there's no use in my burning my fingers—I prefer to stay on the safe side of the fence whenever it's possible. But if you want any help at any time, dear child, just come to me. The best of luck to you—and now, my dear, good-night!"

The crisp pink draperies rustled from the room, the door was closed. The great white dog, crouched carefully on an outlying fold of his mistress's white night-dress, rubbed his cold nose in a timid caress upon her arm. The homely touch, coming to her as it were through a dark maze of falsehood and doubt and strange new bewilderments, touched her to a sudden childlike helplessness.

Slipping to her knees, the girl pressed her cheek to his warm silken fur. "Dear dog," she said, "I'm a cheat. But you know, don't you, that I only did it for fun? I never meant to be really bad—but now there's no choice left to me!"

The dog, regarding her with affection, wagged a patient tail and licked away the slow tears that ran trickling down her cheeks.

VI.

DURING the fortnight that followed, it became increasingly evident to Newport and to the world that if ever social capital had been profitably invested, it was the time, money, and energy that Mrs. J. Harrison Rumbold had invested in her dazzling importation of an imperial Grand Duchess. From the day after the ball there had been no doubt about that in the minds of the unprivileged many who read in the New York dailies (which put their political and foreign news on some inside page in order to do justice to the really interesting sub-

ject of the day) the spread headlines describing the Fairy-like and Costly Entertainment Given to Newport's Most Exclusive Set, by Mrs. J. Harrison Rumbold, in Honor of her Guest the Grand Duchess Varvara; nor, for the matter of that, could there remain any lingering doubts on the subject of Mrs. Rumbold's social fitness in the minds of those who next day sent their cards and monogrammed letters to swell the haystack piled on the gold tray carried to Mrs. Rumbold's bedside.

"Mrs. Vanhuysen requests the pleasure——" "Mrs. Borridaile requests the pleasure——" "Mrs. Seton-Jones requests the pleasure——" Everybody in Newport that *was* anybody, in fact, requested the pleasure of Mrs. Rumbold's company and that of her imperial guest, the Grand Duchess Varvara!

The newly-rich set, who before had formed Mrs. Rumbold's coterie of intimates, now gazed on her with far-off, dazzled eyes. As for the leaders, who had snubbed her, they were now only too glad to acknowledge her bow as she drove down Bellevue Avenue of an afternoon. Her place, indeed, in the fairy ring drawn about the innermost circle of society, could no longer be disputed by the most prejudiced. And after Willy Lushington, the Newport world confessed in a gasping admiration for the cleverness by which it had been overcome, it was the Grand Duchess that had done it.

In spite of continual rumbling threats, that lady's August Relative had not yet desolated the New World by cabling for her immediate return. However, as her time at the best was to be limited, she openly declared her purpose of escaping from her national boredom by enjoying the New World delights to the fullest; and even the indefatigable Mrs. Rumbold herself was sometimes pale under her maquillage before the coming of the morning found the little Grand Duchess ready to shut up her toy-box and go home.

Altogether, it was the most brilliant season that Newport had seen for many a year. Not only European royalty, but international diplomacy in the persons of the American and Japanese commissioners, were present to add distinction to the usual humdrum of American society. Mrs. Rumbold had announced the forthcoming visit of a distinguished American Senator (Tomlinson of Virginia, well known to be associated with "Gentleman Jim" in the colossal B. & W. deal, and a power in the White House). And to crown all with a delicious thrill which gave almost the illusion of royalty, there were murmurs of hovering Anarchists. Mrs. Rumbold imported a couple of plain-clothes men to ride on bicycles behind her and the Grand Duchess in their automobile. The Czar himself could touch no higher pinnacle of importance.

Outside the immediate earshot of the ladies of Stormcliff, yet

another topic was offered to wag tongues and set ears to pricking. The desperate devotion paid by Jack Borridaile to the imperial Varvara—what would be its outcome? The difference in rank between them, with the thousand obstacles which it represented, was so obvious and final that a diplomatist, of all men in the world, was the least likely to attempt bridging it. Furthermore, it was an open secret that the enterprising mother of Letty Rumbold had already marked down Jack as her prey. Was it not possible this permitted devotion to her beautiful guest was only part of Mrs. Rumbold's deep-laid schemes? To win him to the house through interest in a quarter manifestly impossible; then, perhaps, when the beautiful stranger received her orders to leave Newport, and her admirer was left to fancy himself disconsolate—then perhaps propinquity, a little artful managing, a few smiles and tender overtures of sympathy from Letty—well, one could never tell. In these affairs tact was everything, and in bringing Newport to her knees she had already accomplished a more stupendous task than in winning over young Jack Borridaile.

But Jack himself, had this adroit schemer known it, was by no means of a calibre or of a mood to be dangled thus easily and then caught on the rebound by a waiting hand. Having never before, in all his thirty years, so much as fancied himself in love, his suddenly conceived passion for the charming Varvara had all the fire and purity of a first attachment; while at his period of life his feelings were deep and not easily shaken.

Just what procedure the situation demanded from him was a question to which he had given many anxious days and restless, despairing nights. Though troubled with no false modesty, he well understood the gulf that lay between a plain American citizen and an imperial daughter of all the Russias. The situation, viewed in the strong light of practical common sense, seemed sufficiently hopeless. And then, always at her side dangled the unpleasant Debreczin, whom so many people considered a Hungarian blending of Bayard and of Brummel. That he was over-head-and-ears in love with Varvara was evident; and if she happened to return his fancy, what objections could be raised, even by the august head of her family, to the suit of a long-descended noble, knight of the Golden Fleece, and own cousin to the Hapsburgs? The idea was monstrous, disgusting—but always, unhappily, perfectly possible.

After all, what midsummer madness was his thought of winning such a prize! Even the Grand Duchess herself, it seemed, must realize his folly. For, "Oh, Mr. Borridaile," she had said to him one fine August morning, as they waited together under the *porte cochère* of Stormcliff for the other members of the party who were to drive on Jack's four-in-hand coach, the Firefly, up-river for lunch and back

again—"oh, Mr. Borridaile, it's all very well, you know, your pretty story of the Duchess of Dreams and the gallant knight! But suppose the princess was a hard, tough, thick-skinned sort of creature, that refused to wake up, even when he poked pins into her and screamed in her ear? Or suppose, even, that she did wake up, and found that she was held down with a thousand invisible chains, so that no matter how hard she tried, she could not move. . . . And she had to sit up, and bite her lip to keep the tears back, as she watched the prince ride away again. Tell me," she added, with a curious hint of pain in her voice, "what would have happened then?"

"I don't know," Jack answered sturdily, "for in my story, you see, it never could happen that the prince rode away."

VII.

It was not till the homeward drive that Prince Debreczin found an opportunity to renew his private conversation with the lady whose personality held for him so keen and significant an interest.

Her company in the outward course was monopolized by the host, Jack Borridaile; but by an astute piece of manœuvring on the part of Mrs. Rumbold it was Miss Letty who shared the box with the coachman on the return trip. ("She is *so* ambitious to learn four-in-hand driving, the dear child!")

Thus it fell out that the Grand Duchess, with her blue hat and her enormous white dog, bestowed herself in the back seat of the vehicle. Her devoted Hungarian clambered immediately to the vacant place by her side. In the privacy thus assured, and guaranteed, moreover, by the beat of hoofs and the rush of the flying air, the Prince bent suddenly toward the lady at his side.

"Madame," he said softly, "I had expected that you would make this opportunity. It is long since we have spoken together. I had thought you would have news for me before this."

The girl cast a little scared look on him from her large blue eyes. "I am sorry," she answered in a low tone; "I have nothing."

"Nothing?" The monosyllable flashed out at her like a whip. She shrank away, protesting faintly.

"But I have tried, monsieur, I have tried my best! Here in this town, where I am so conspicuous, every step of mine is watched and guarded. This recent foolish agitation about the dynamiters—it has made things ten times harder for me."

The Prince was loud in his scorn. "The Anarchists? They murdered my queen, it is true. But here in America—bah! I mock myself not badly of them and their dynamite!"

The little fat Senator on the seat before them, catching the last word of this speech, removed his cigar from his mouth and turned.

"The Anarchists? You are right, Prince—a set of crazy bums! They do say some of them have been seen lurking about Newport this year—Morrow, that served a term at Auburn last year for wrecking a peanut-stand with a bomb, and Zebuykurtz, who did an Anarchist play a while ago in New York and was egged off the stage. Don't be scared, Duchess. America'll take good care of you."

The Grand Duchess bowed sweetly. "A thousand thanks, Monsieur the Senator!" Then as the gallant statesman turned back to his conversation with Mrs. Marsten, the girl's voice sank again to a tremulous whisper:

"What can I do, monsieur? Already my Petroff has cultivated intimacy with one of the under-footmen at Borridaile Court, where the sittings are held. He finds they sit with doors and windows wide open—no possible chance of listening!"

The Prince smiled sardonically. "But the method I pointed out to you, madame! All Newport has remarked his devotion. Do you really believe he could deny you anything?"

A crimson flush swept over her face. In an agony of helpless self-revelation, her blue eyes travelled to the broad-shouldered back which towered on the box seat. Then she answered her questioner with energy.

"I do believe it! Yes, once or twice already, when I have dared to lead the conversation to these forbidden topics, he has drawn back always——"

With a bored impatience, her tormentor interrupted her. "Indeed? But all this, madame, is none of my affair. My chief gives me till Sunday; I give you till Saturday!"

In wide-eyed horror the girl gasped at him. "Till Saturday? And this is Thursday!"

"By Saturday noon," Debreczin went on icily, "if you have not handed me the desired information, then I advise you to glance at the New York papers for Saturday evening. They will probably interest you—you and Madame Rumbold." Then as the girl, in half-comprehending terror, continued to stare at him, he leaned toward her with a sudden tone of finality. "Forty-five hours I give you, madame—till noon on Saturday."

With a sudden thought, she faced him. "And suppose, monsieur, I give you the same?"

"My secrets, you mean?"—the Prince was openly triumphant. "Do you fancy, madame, I had not weighed consequences before I took you into my confidence? If you speak before Saturday to betray my secrets, together with those of Russia, will it not be to destroy with your own hand your character as Russian Grand Duchess? On the other hand, if you refuse my terms and speak on Saturday after I have spoken, *who will believe you?*"

The girl collapsed in sudden despair. "You are very subtle, monsieur. I have no chance but to serve you. What shall I do?"

The Prince leaned toward her, whispering impressively. "Listen, madame: to-night, as you know, Mr. Rumbold gives a dinner—what they call a stag dinner—in honor of his friend, the little fat Senator on the seat before us. Among the guests are the members of the commission, American and Japanese. Mr. Borridaile, as secretary, will attend. Now, as I happen to know, the commission has an extra session at seven o'clock. The dinner is at half-past eight. This means, of course, that from their sitting, the commission move straight to the dinner-table. After dinner—*eh bien*, madame, after dinner things are not impossible!"

The girl answered him with a despairing recklessness. "Oh, monsieur, what is the use of my hesitating any more? I have Mrs. Rumbold to think of, as well as myself. Yes, I'll serve you faithfully this time! I'll stay home from Mrs. Marsten's dinner-dance to-night—this faintness that has already attacked me once or twice may serve as my excuse. But then"—she paused to reflect—"those plain-clothes men that have lately been such a restriction upon me——"

The Prince nodded. "Have no fear, madame. All private police shall be withdrawn from the grounds. You have seen yourself how the Senator feels on the subject. We will speak to Mr. Rumbold, who, to my certain knowledge, regards the whole alarm as absurd. Trust me, the way shall be cleared."

The Grand Duchess pressed her white cheek to Vassily's feathery ear, and spoke still with the same recklessness: "And then, monsieur, if I succeed in extracting any information or laying hand on any papers, how shall I convey them to you?"

"Telephone—messenger . . ." The Prince considered the question with care. "All methods are likely to be unsafe. No, here is the best way. I will excuse myself from the dinner—an engagement, say, to play bridge at the club. I will go there in my automobile. I will change my Inverness for a black raincoat which I left in the cloak-room last week. I will go to the pier, take a canoe, and paddle back to Mr. Rumbold's harbor below. At the near end of the pergola, where we spoke together that first night, you will find me waiting. Upon my word, the situation becomes truly dramatic! You understand the arrangements, Princess?"

The girl took in her breath. Her face was very white but her voice was steady as she responded: "The rear end of the pergola at, say, twelve o'clock. Yes, it is understood!"

The coach whirled from the wide thronged avenue into the white road that led between green lawns to the door of Stormcliff. As Debreczin noticed the tremulous shrinking of the fingers which for an

instant were laid in his for the descent, he smiled grimly to himself. Then as the coachman, turning away from his restive team, came back to rejoin his imperial guest, the Prince observed with a smile which for once was devoid of all save satisfaction the self-revealing glance which, like the sparkle of living sunshine, flashed between the two. A passionate longing, a clinging tenderness, a perfect trust—in both pairs of young eyes, his keen gaze read no less. And he touched his cold lips with his gloved hand, to control their smile of triumph.

"She can deny him nothing," was the thought that ran tingling through his brain, "and he—he can deny her nothing!" He turned to follow the party to the tennis-lawns, where tea-tables were spread. "On Sunday," he resolved piously, "I go to mass, for beyond doubt I shall have the wherewithal for thankfulness!"

VIII.

To the deep regret of everybody concerned, the Grand Duchess was unable to accompany her hostess to Mrs. Marsten's dinner-dance that was to follow the coaching-party. The long exposure to the August sun had given her a nervous headache which showed itself plainly in her white cheeks and nervously twitching hands. The doctor, hastily summoned, recommended quiet and absolute repose. Fortunately, Mr. Rumbold's dinner party to the Senator and the commissioners was separated from the apartments of the imperial lady by something like a quarter of a mile of masonry and space. Mrs. Rumbold, with affectionate solicitude and many injunctions to the maids in charge of her guest, swept off to her evening of pleasure.

It might have been ten o'clock that the Grand Duchess, under the ministering hands of her maid, fell into a deep sleep. The servant, glad enough to be released for enjoyment of the gaieties below, nodded to her companion, and together they tip-toed from the room.

By eleven o'clock the dinner and informal speech-making were over. In Mr. Rumbold's celebrated pool-room, with its dozen green tables and huge, glittering buffet, the guests disported themselves after the manner of men more or less hard worked, relaxing in the warmth of a summer night. Glistening white shirt-sleeves and a glistening black cigar, a long slim cue and a long iced drink, seemed, to judge by the appearance of the roomful, to represent the moment's idea of solid comfort. From the responsibilities of the day, as from the constraints of female presence, they were now freed. Even had their eyes, dazzled with the glistening whiteness of the room and fixed upon the spinning ivory balls, been able to pierce the vine-embowered gloom of the veranda without, they would hardly have found in the presence of an inquisitive servant maid any ground for concern or even for surprise.

Up-stairs in the apartment of the Grand Duchess Varvara, the

Pompadour bed was empty. The doors were all bolted on the inside, with the exception of the glazed casement leading to the stone balcony and flying staircase without; this latter, curiously enough, was fast locked from the outside. In one corner of the boudoir, beside a suit-case of cheap and shabby canvas, Vassily lay curled as a proud and sleepless guardian. The suit-case was, however, empty of a certain humble uniform which for the past month had been packed away, and which might quite reasonably have expected never to be called into service again. The black alpaca gown was, in fact, at this moment doing duty on the piazza outside the pool-room window. Beneath the starched ruffles of the white bib-apron labored a heart torn between two violently conflicting necessities, and from under the crisp white trifle of the muslin cap two wide-open blue eyes followed with straining watchfulness every movement of hand or eye in the jovial, smoke-filled room within.

The gentlemen were absorbed in their game, in their stories, in absorbing the contents of the buffet. The window, cut low to the floor, was casemented after the French fashion, and therefore blocked with no wire mosquito bar. Before the window stood a little Turkish divan. Over the high-cushioned back of the divan, John Borridaile, warmed with the eager pursuit of his game, had a moment before flung his coat.

The girl without stood breathing unsteadily, like one exhausted with running. To-night, as she knew, she had come face to face with the necessity of action, under penalty of a price which her perplexed sense of honor as well as her tormented heart forbade her to pay. Until this moment what programme of action had framed itself in her whirling brain, she hardly knew, hardly dared to think. But now—was it Providence she had to thank, or those powers of evil which are said to make smooth the path of the unwilling sinner?

The wearer of that coat had, as she knew, come straight from the evening session of the commission to the dinner-table; he, the repositior and recorder of all its secrets, which were the secrets of the great nation's party to the compact. Folded in the pockets of that innocent black garment, who could tell were what revealing papers, what world-swaying documents? She had but to watch her opportunity, when the careless heads in the room within were circled attentively around some spectacularly skilful play, and then so gently, ever so gently, put out her hand and draw it toward her.

Then she would be free—free from her intolerable servitude to the sleek, heavy-eyed gentleman who even then before her eyes was delighting the roomful with his superb handling of the cue. She would be free of her intolerable dread of bringing disgrace upon Mrs. Rumbold, free to enjoy the two weeks of ineffable and immeasurable bliss

that yet remained to her; relieved, above all, of the haunting horror that in disappearing she would leave behind her, not the exquisite phantasm of an unattainable dream, but the vulgar scandal of an ordinary cheat and impostor.

But she would be a thief.

The glittering room behind the black waving casement swayed and rocked before her. There was a sensation of nausea in her throat, of cold moisture upon her limbs, of a black, unanswerable bewilderment in her brain. One thing only she saw clearly: whatever way she chose, she would be choosing the path of evil, of irreparable injury to some other human soul beside herself. Here was the penalty of that false situation which, in girlish glee and unthinking exultation in her own dazzling good-fortune, she had accepted at the hands of Mrs. Rumbold. And now, since evil she must do, why not choose that which would at least result in no immediate and inevitable catastrophe to the victim? For, after all, it might be years before the Russian government would betray the fact that it held this information; and even then it would not be she herself, it would be Prince Debreczin, who would betray the name of John Borridaile as one concerned in the business. After all, why should she augur any ill consequences for him, either to-day or in the distant future?

She would be a thief, it is true; but would the mere filching of these pieces of paper alter one whit her moral status in this regard? She, already the thief of honor, the thief of love—was it not laughable that she should shrink from this last and least of disgraces?

The room within was suddenly very still. The Hungarian, with a delicate flourish of his cue, had bent over the further table. Before her eyes were ringed a throng of tensely attentive backs. Through the open casement her hand crawled like a soft white snake. For the moment it seemed to her she had no emotion, no life, no blood.

"Bravo!" came a hoarse, jovial voice from the table—the Senator's voice. "Good for you! Now the red ball, Prince!"

Again the room was silent. Still her hand crawled on. It touched the soft, tingling folds of cloth, grasped them, began its journey back again. The buttons scraped lightly against the edge of the casement—behind the girl's rigid lips, the gullet rose stranglingly. There was an outburst of applause from the table. "You're all right, Prince!" "Where's Jerome Keough now?" "When you want to tour the country, Prince, I'd like the chance to manage you!" The coat, like the black shadow of a swaying candle-flame, had slipped from the divan, through the casement, had lost itself in the thick blackness of the night without.

Inside the room the Hungarian, as though playing directly into the hands of his tool and accomplice, continued his game, swift,

daring, and spectacular. Outside, in the darkness of the piazza, his cause was progressing with no less brilliance. With shrinking, resolute hands, the girl fumbled rapidly through the many pockets of the coat. Handkerchief, pocket-book, cigarette-case, two coronetted envelopes whereon, with a pang of guilty delight, she saw her own careless handwriting; a half-dozen newspaper cuttings . . . stay, what was this?

Between her hands she held a long manila envelope. The seal was of red wax, large and official-looking. Turning it over, she beheld in the upper right-hand corner the words, "Official Business"—from whence her scared glance flew to the superscription, unmistakable in Jack's clear black handwriting:

For the Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington, D. C.

Her hands quivered, her heart leaped in a spasm which seemed the very sickness of triumph. The official report of the proceedings of the commission, which the secretary had obviously brought with him to wait a better opportunity for mailing—the very information for which her tormentor had conditioned—here she held it in her hand!

Behind the lace-covered casement she could hear the Prince making his adieux and acknowledgments to his host, amid the chorused remonstrances of his friends and admirers. In a few moments now he would be there at the secret meeting-place. Very well, she was not afraid to meet him! With stealthy touch she replaced the coat between the window and the divan, just as it might have fallen when flung down by the wearer. For one moment her sharpened glance, darting between the waving lace curtains of the casement, fell as it seemed directly into the eyes of Borridaile. He was standing at the other side of the nearest pool-table, his hands raised to light a cigarette, his careless glance filled with laughter at the pleasantries of the little Japanese at his elbow. Never before as in this moment when she herself crouched invisible before him, divided from him by one link more added to the chain of treachery which bound her, had he appeared to her so upright, so filled with a vivid and kindly life, so completely the incarnation of all that woman desires in man. Suddenly his figure melted and swam in a blur of blinding tears. Clamping her teeth over her lower lip in a hard bite, the girl sprang silently to her feet. With noiseless steps she made her way down the stone staircase, down the garden-path, to the tangled rose-garden above the terrace and pergola.

Here, as she knew, it was safe to wait. On this night of festivity

the servants were all on duty in the house; and even if one caught a glimpse of a little maid in cap and apron wandering through the grounds, what then? And for the first time she blessed Mrs. Rumbold for her passion for things European, in excluding from her grounds the crudely revealing radiance of electric light.

She had sat there perhaps a half-hour, sheltered behind a dew-wet and fragrant rose-tree, looking out over the dim liquid expanse before her, when suddenly she started . . . strained her ears. Yes, it was unmistakable—faintly, rhythmically, every moment nearer, the dip of a paddle came up to her through the windless darkness of the night. He was coming, the master to whom like Faust she was selling body and soul in return for an ephemeral and sordid boon. Well, it was too late now to draw back. Let him come, she was ready! With convulsive finger-tips she pressed the precious document, folded in one corner of her apron; and so she stood motionless, listening . . . listening . . . listening . . .

Then faintly splashing paddle echoed hollowly within the walls of the artificial harbor below; soft footsteps sounded upon the marble stairs. The moment had come. With flying feet, the girl fled down the half-seen steps that led to the terrace below. She paused for a moment, straining her eyes through the shadows. Swift as her movements had been, it was plain that her enemy's eagerness had led his steps in advance of hers. With faltering steps, she entered the pergola.

Beneath the vine-covered trellis it was very dark—not so dark, however, but she could distinguish the tall, black-clad figure which stood against the dusk of the leafy wall. Horror of the thing she had to do pervaded her like a deadly environing essence—horror of the man who had driven her to this shame as to a shambles, horror of his presence, his touch, his very voice.

Thrusting the document into his willing hands, "Here, take it!" she whipped the words at him like a lash. Then with recoil quick as from a serpent she turned back to the starlit space of the doorway. The air without smelled fresh and sweet to her nostrils. And she—what right had she to be breathing it at all?

The sustaining fire of necessary action once removed, quick and terrible was the fall of her soul to the ashes of reaction. By a brave and skilful piece of audacity, she had bought a moment's safety for herself and for Mrs. Rumbold; but who could tell what future calamity she had unloosed for her own soul, for the country she loved, for the man who was a thousand times dearer to her than both together? For a moment the wild impulse flamed up within her to turn back, to beg from her enemy the restitution of the stolen letter, to offer him— A helpless laugh fluttered up in her throat. To demand of

the wolf the lamb already rent and half swallowed—that were the more reasonable request!

On the marble steps below her sounded the flying tread of feet. Turning, she found herself again face to face with the tall figure in its long black coat.

“Is that you, madame? Have you brought anything for me?”

She stood silent, motionless, staring through the starlit darkness. For the tones, quick to the point of ferocity, were those of Debreczin.

IX.

SHE laughed, a little jangling, guarded peal, at her own terror. What had seemed bewildering was, after all, at second glance contemptibly simple.

“Monsieur,” she whispered hurriedly, “I had not thought you so dull as not to understand that letter I handed you just now. Did you fancy it was a mere *billet-doux*? Must I explain it was the official report of the commission, which I stole just now—that is the word, *stole*—from the coat-pocket of the secretary?”

The Prince bent toward her. “Are you dreaming?” he asked harshly.

“I? Oh, no!” she answered, with a sigh. “Look at the letter, monsieur. You will see that I speak the truth.”

“What letter?” he repeated, with furious impatience. “You have given me no letter!”

“Do you deny,” she asked with sudden horror, “the letter you took from my hand just now in the pergola?”

He laughed sardonically. “You are clever, madame—but I repeat, I must deny your story absolutely!”

She caught at her breath, while in her soul bewilderment congealed itself to the cold concreteness of formulated terror. This over-subtle opponent of hers—it was plain now for what purpose he had retreated through the darkness of the pergola, doubled the path below, and reascended the marble staircase in renewed pursuit of his victim. Her mistake—she understood now what careless folly, what mere vanity, her mistake had been. To yield up the precious document without verification, without spoken acknowledgment in return, that was bad enough; but the original, the fatal, mistake lay deeper. To think that by one piece of nefarious service she could buy her freedom from the unscrupulous man who held such power over her—to believe that by straining her abilities to their perpetual utmost, by steeping her soul in crime at his command, she could ever hope to win her quittance from a master such as this! She understood now—she had betrayed all that she held most dear, and for nothing. She had paid the price, but had failed to grasp the recompense.

The Hungarian's cold voice broke in on her whirling thoughts. "Let us talk business, madame," he said decidedly. "I am no child, you understand, to be caught with a cock-and-bull excuse such as this. You thought perhaps you could buy your own immunity and spare your lover by one and the same clever stroke at the expense of poor Debreczin's stupidity. Ah, no, madame; if you must tell me lies, I beg you to flatter my intelligence with more subtle lies than this. Come, you say you succeeded in laying hands on one of the official reports of the commission?"

She nodded wearily. "To my shame—yes!"

He took a step toward her; she could see his eyes glisten in the darkness. "I begin to understand. It is highly possible you have the letter; but, having done so much, your heart fails at the last, the deciding step. Come—if you really have possession of it, hand it over!"

She stepped back. "As I have told you," she replied unsteadily, "it is no longer in my possession."

"If I could be sure of that!" His voice was in her ear; again she stepped back from his unpleasant nearness, but this time she found herself held by a vise-like constriction on her arm. "I am weary of your trifling, madame. You swear to me you laid hands on the necessary document; you refuse to yield it to me. Very well, it becomes my plain duty to find if you speak the truth!"

Again she recoiled from him, struggling helplessly, like a wild bird against the detaining springe. "What do you mean?" she asked in a choked whisper.

"I shall search you, madame!"

She drew herself up rigidly against his hand. "You dare not," she protested vehemently, "with the city all around us, with a whole houseful ready to rouse itself if I call for help. No, monsieur, I am not afraid!"

"That is fortunate," he retorted with irony. "I should think, you see, that you would be afraid of the spectacle thus presented to Newport and the world—the Grand Duchess Varvara, in the masquerade of a parlor-maid, keeping a midnight rendezvous with Debreczin, the celebrated eater of hearts. My poor friend Jack! I can see his face as he hears——"

He felt her quiver and droop upon his arm. "Scream!" he said agreeably. "Scream, *ma belle*, scream!"

"But you have the letter, you have it already!" her feeble protest reiterated itself, then broke off in a strangling gasp of horror. His heavy hand was on her shoulder. Desperately she resisted, while from her rigid lips the helpless agony of flesh and spirit broke in a breathless, half-voiced cry.

Soft and inarticulate as was her protest, it was not without its effect. The nightmare touch which detained her suddenly relaxed, Debrezin's head was suddenly lifted to glare straight before him. The girl, held now only by a hand on one quivering arm, turned to follow the direction of his eyes. There before her, half seen in the leafy shadows of the terrace, stood a figure in that dim light the reduplication of the one beside her—a tall, lean-shouldered form, wearing a long, dark coat. "Was you wantin' help, lady?" asked the figure briskly.

The girl took in her breath in a wave of sudden relief that saw nothing beyond the moment's blessed deliverance. The special watchman lately employed by Mrs. Rumbold, and whom the man at her side had vauntingly promised to have discharged before the meeting of to-night—how could she ever have believed that his boasted influence, even with the Senator on his side, would weigh heavily enough with Mr. Rumbold to cause him to give over his settled plans?

"So you're the secret-service man?" she gasped. "Thank God you've come!"

But the Hungarian's hold on her arm did not relax. "Then if you're a policeman, my good man," he said with swift readiness, "you can give me assistance. Here is no question of vulgar assault—this woman has a valuable letter that she has stolen from me. I call on you to force her to restore it."

"A letter?"—the man before them repeated the word in accents of sharp inquiry. In sudden comprehension, the girl took in her breath. How bewildered she had been, how lost in sickened horror at the physical violence offered her, not to have understood at once!

"Then it was to you," she asked swiftly, "that I handed the letter just now in the pergola?"

The man nodded with a reluctance visible in the darkness. "Yes 'm. Jest to me. Though, I'll own, I did n't rightly understand."

Suddenly the detaining touch on her arm relaxed and fell. The Hungarian, laughing delightedly in the darkness, was bowing before her with all his old-time suavity. "Madame! A thousand pardons! Your mistake was, after all, a perfectly natural one—who could have suspected a watchman? Here, my man, I'll take the letter."

The girl raised her hand. "No, wait one moment—wait!"

For, struggling to a sudden overmastering life within her, she was conscious of the impulse which, as a few moments ago she had turned from the pergola, had moved her soul to sudden qualms of doubt. And this new-born thing, this suddenly illuminated power of perception, this steadfast defiance of all ill consequences save the stain of evil consciously incurred, she knew for herself, her very self. There on the dim rustling hillside beneath the stars, between a stranger openly

hostile and a stranger unknown, and weighed down by a burden of remorse and fears and hopeless, tender longings, her distracted, untaught soul came for the first time to itself. This piece of hideous treachery that she had planned—why, it was impossible. Thank God for the power of choice which still was hers!

"No," she said quietly; "I have changed my mind. I can't let you have the letter after all."

"Indeed!" replied the Prince, with a breath that whistled curiously between his teeth. "And what do you propose to do with it?"

"It goes back to its owner," she replied with intrepidity, "tomorrow."

Debreczin turned from her to the waiting policeman. "Here," he said, "give me the letter, my man. Here's a dollar for your pains."

But the shadowy form drew back. "Will I give it to him, lady?" he asked doubtfully.

"No!" she cried beneath her breath.

The Prince laughed. "This becomes absurd," he said coolly. "I see I must inform you of my identity. I am one of Mrs. Borridaile's visitors, the Prince Debreczin."

With a tone quickened to a curiously vivid interest, the watchman interrupted him: "A prince did you say, sir?"

"A prince," retorted the Hungarian, "of the Dual Empire. Now you know who I am, will you give me my property?"

The man drew back with a gesture expressive even in the dim starlight. "If you think I'm one to favor princess!" he returned with brief contempt.

For an instant the Hungarian stood silent, then, advancing in sudden desperation, "I'll have that letter," he hissed with a curious roughness of accent which showed how strangely he was excited. "I'm going to have that letter, if I have to wring both your necks to get it!"

For an instant the girl's flesh stirred in terror—would his ruthless determination lead him, after all, to fling all prudence to the winds? The power of those long, sinewy hands of his she knew only too well. Suddenly her breath came back to her, in a little fluttering laugh of pure joy. The stranger's arm was lifted; in his outstretched hand, levelled with the Prince's head, was a small object that glittered wanly in the starlight.

"Prince or no prince," said the man in a voice that seemed to clamp itself over the other's will like a vise, "lay a finger on me or on the young lady, and this is what you git. It's death, no less. Do you understand?"

Debreczin, drawing himself haughtily to his angular height, stood immovable. "Put up your pistol, man," he said with dignity. "I

am not one, you understand, to be frightened by mere threats of death; though I recognize, I own, the superior force of the argument you present. For one of my rank, as you know, the disgrace of the public fracas which you threaten would be infinitely worse than death. So as the situation has plainly reached the point of impossibility, I see no reason for continuing it longer. Madame, I have the honor to bid you good-night!"

The girl stared at him. Was he thus easily abandoning the field? With what purpose did he go, with what plans of retaliatory vengeance?

"You understand," he said swiftly. "The conditions remain unchanged. There are still thirty-six hours left. I think, in view of the consequences entailed by your continual obstinacy, I can afford to abandon the present field of dispute. Tell your mistress from me I will give her as I said till noon on Saturday. Twelve o'clock on Saturday, do you understand? And if by then——"

His voice broke off in a sudden inarticulate snarl more horrifying than any spoken words. Then, recovering himself:

"*Au revoir, ma belle!*" His tone was jaunty with a cynical assurance which showed how secure was his confidence in her ultimate surrender. Then, doffing his hat with a sardonic salute, he turned and ran lightly down the marble steps.

From the tall figure of the stranger, motionless in the darkness before her, the girl turned with a little weary sigh. Until this moment she had not realized how completely the terrible strain of the night had drained her of nervous and muscular force. And her very voice drooped limply as she said:

"And now will you give me my letter? Thank you very, very much. It's impossible that you could ever know how much you have done for me *to-night*."

"Wait a moment," said the stranger's voice, with an odd eagerness. "I beg pardon, ma'am, if I'm wrong, but ain't it—ain't it Angie Hooper?"

The girl recoiled like a detected thief. Her first and strongest impulse was to turn in flight. Then as the familiar accent, the old familiar name, touched warmly upon cords of her soul long disused, she was drawn back as by a homing instinct deeper and more powerful than the springs of her terror. For a moment her eyes strained through the thick shadows; then with suddenly kindled recollection,

"Elmer Morrow!" she cried softly.

X.

THE man laughed—a laugh of joy so acute that its unbearable ecstasy ended in a sob. "I thought 't was you," he said brokenly, "but I was n't goin' to give you away before *him*. Good Lord, Angie,

have I ever stopped thinkin' of you sence I left East Bayville? Tell me—how are you, little girl?"

"I'm well," she answered softly. "And you, Elmer? I'm glad to see you have such a good place, and doing so well in it!"

"Wait one moment," said the man harshly, "'fore you let yourself speak with me one moment further, I want you to understand out an' out how I stand—I can't lie to you, Angie! You think I stand here for the law. Well, I don't. I stand here agin it!"

For an instant the girl stared, horror-smitten. Then the remembrance of her own deed of an hour ago came back to her quick and stinging. Who was she, to recoil from this poor playmate of her childhood, however low he had fallen?

"You're not—a burglar, Elmer?" she asked in pitiful accents.

"A burglar!" The harsh New England voice tossed the word back to her in the same scornful tones as those in which they had repudiated the Hungarian's assertion of his title. "So you think I'd go agin the laws for my own greed and gain? No, it's the laws themselves I'm after—the laws and the tyrants that ride atop of 'em! Do you know what this is, Angie?"

He held out to her the little shining instrument with which, a few moments before, he had compelled the submission of her tormentor. In a curiously shrinking terror, she bent over it. It was no revolver, as she had thought, but a black body the size and shape of a thick candle, curiously bound over and over with myriad twists of shining white wire.

"Let me look at it—quick, I must be going!" she said hurriedly. The man drew back his hand.

"T ain't safe for little girls to handle," he said, with a ghastly attempt at jocularity. "It's—it's dynamite."

"Dynamite!" From the horror of that word, as from the living presence of death, the girl recoiled in a purely instinctive panic which for one fearful instant made all perils of the soul seem light. Then, controlling herself to face the import of that word, her quick thought travelled back across Mrs. Rumbold's terrors and precautions of the last few days, to the Senator's mention of Elmer's very name this afternoon.

"Then you're—an Anarchist, Elmer?" she asked gently.

"An Anarchist—why not?" he retorted vehemently. "If you could see the life I've led sence I come up to N' York—I've ben swindled, I've ben starvin', I've ben in jail fer takin' food I had to have or starve. Then, comin' out o' jail, what chance was there fer me—an ex-convict! Do you know what it means fer a man to have that name tagged onto him, Angie? So when I fell in with a Russian chap that started to tell me what was wrong with the world, an' the

way to mend it, do you think it's queer I listened to him? For he told me *right*. So I jined in with him. Though, I'll own, I ain't done much to date. Last year when I tried my bomb went wild. But this time, ef it's the last time I lift my hand on earth, I ain't agoin' to miss!"

The girl stood listening in restless hesitation. Twelve o'clock, as she knew, had sounded; by one o'clock Mrs. Rumbold might be home from the dance. She might be missed; even ascending by the outside staircase of carved stone that led from the rose-garden to her boudoir window, she might find awkward encounter. Nevertheless, there was in Morrow's last words a grim and foreboding wildness that held her motionless to the spot.

"Elmer," she whispered, "what do you mean? Not——" The sudden thought that came to her chilled her lips beyond the power of speech.

His eyes scorched hers through the darkness. "You'll not give me away, Angie, *that* I know! You know fer yourself there's nothin' I can refuse you, even ef I never ben more than dirt under your little feet to you. But ef you ask me to put the noose 'round my neck and give you the rope's end to hold, then it's done—done cheerful. Yes, I'm down here on business, I'll own, sence you ask me, Angie!" He lowered his voice to a whisper that cut her ear like a needle: "I'm after—I'm after that Russian princess that's stayin' here in the house."

"Oh!" Beyond the monosyllable, she could make no immediate reply. Her chief conscious fear was that the rising faintness which numbed her limbs should likewise take from her the power of action in this swift and terrible crisis. She gripped her hands and breathed hard. Should she reveal to the man before her the secret which would preserve her in assured safety from the shocking danger which loomed violent and hideous before her? The secret which, after all, unless by some miracle, would within a brief and measured space of time be blazed by the Hungarian before the eyes of a grinning world? And yet the miracle—to the chances of that miracle her soul clung when faced with the alternative of intrusting her momentous secret to the keeping of the poor crack-brain before her. Swiftly her distraught soul gathered its forces together to grapple with this flying and desperate necessity.

"Elmer," she said, "you told me just now there was nothing you would n't do for me."

He raised his hand in solemn affirmation. From the gaily-lighted house on the hillside above, the gay notes of a piano came down to them through the whispering darkness. She could see the wire-wrapped dynamite glisten whitely in his hand.

"Fore the Lord," he said earnestly, "I spoke no more'n the truth. Sence the old days when I kerried your books to school, Angie, I never wanted any greater privilege than to serve you. Anything's done that you have a mind to ask me!"

She leaned toward him with swift intensity. "Then, Elmer, don't do this terrible thing. For my sake, spare the Princess Varvara!"

"What?" he cried in harsh amazement. "You, Angie, takin' the side of the oppressors of the poor? What's the Princess to you, that you should take her part? What have you to do with her, I say?" Then, as his eyes, piercing the darkness, took in for the first time the details of the black and white uniform she wore, he spoke with dawning comprehension: "Ah, you're here in the same house with her. You're one of the hired help, Angie, I reckon?"

She nodded in a sudden perception of the grotesque truth of his words. He went on swiftly:

"You're maid to the Princess herself, then, perhaps, Angie?"

"I am much with the Princess—yes," she answered tremulously.

"Fond of her?" he asked roughly.

She hesitated; scorn of her own feeble nature, hatred of her own flagrant misdoings, made any affirmative answer to that question an impossible mockery which, even for the sake of the vital point to be gained, ran beyond her powers. So,

"I am sorry for her," she replied in a low voice.

Morrow's sardonic misbelief broke from him in a hoarse but guarded spasm of laughter.

"Sorry for her!" he sneered. "That's a good one, Angie! When was she ever sorry for one of the poor wretches that she an' her kin have ground into the dust for centuries? And what call have we to feel sorry for her, set up high and mighty in her grandeur an' happiness above us? But jest the same——"

"Wait a moment, Elmer!" The girl snatched at the flying opportunity revealed by his words. "Listen, Elmer—so it's for her privileges you hate her, for the happiness you think she enjoys above you and me?"

He nodded. "But I know a way to even things up!"—and with the glittering object in his hand he gesticulated murderously. The girl shrank away.

"Be careful with that fearful stuff, Elmer, please!" His arms sank obediently to his sides. She went on feverishly:

"But, Elmer, if I could assure you with absolute knowledge, on absolute faith, that the woman whom you are intending to kill is of all women in the world the most miserable; that beneath the splendor for which you hate her lies nothing but hatred for herself, remorse for the past, and terror for the future; that with the whole force

of her unhappy heart she loves a man to whom she can be nothing more than the common dust under his feet; that she lies body and soul at the mercy of an unscrupulous tyrant who is planning to destroy her more slowly but no less cruelly than you—oh, Elmer, don't you think that you at least might hold back your hand and have mercy on her?"

He seemed unexpectedly struck by her words. "So the pore girl's in love," he said, with a deep sigh. "Well, I can feel for her there. Pore thing!"

"You'll spare her, Elmer, you and your friends?" she asked, with a throb of hope.

Still he hesitated. "You say," he asked slowly, "that some one else is after her, meanin' mischief?"

She nodded painfully. "Mischief," she replied, "far worse than the death that you hold over her."

He tenderly fingered the dynamite in his hand. "That's queer," he replied simply. "What can it be, I wonder, an' who can it be—worse'n *this*?" Again he considered; then with the quickness of a sudden thought, "That chap that you was havin' the row with jest now," he asked swiftly. "I ain't had a chance yet to speak of him—fact is, he was clean knocked out o' my head by the sight o' you, Angie, an' the sound o' your voice saying 'Elmer' agin. But—what was that message he gin you fer your mistress? Angie, is he her enemy that you are speakin' of?"

She nodded sorrowfully. "And you saw the kind of man he is. Don't you think you can safely leave her to him?"

"To him!"—he repeated her words savagely. "And him a prince, one of the destroyers of mankind. Yes, you're right, Angie—we'll leave the whole devil's brood to devour each other, like a nest o' scorpions. You're—sure he'll do it, Angie?"

"As sure," she replied, "as I am of nothing else on earth!"

He was quick to detect the note of anguish in her voice. "And what's that to you, Angie?" he asked, with contempt. "It's not you the cuss is goin' to hurt, is it? If it were——!"

"No, no, indeed!" she dispelled any doubt which might lead to Elmer's detection of her secret. "No one is going to hurt me, Elmer; thank you very much just the same. And now I must say good-night—it grows frightfully late. Thank you for what you have done for me—for promising not to harm my princess, for saving me from that ruffian just now, for saving my letter. Ah, my letter!"

"Here it is." He produced it from his pocket and held it out to her. In a whirl of suddenly-born perplexities, she surveyed the pale half-seen symbol of her temptation, of her fall, of her tardy regeneration.

How to convey it back to its rightful owner? How to send it to the post, or to Borridaile Court, without admitting some one fatally into the confidence of the Grand Duchess Varvara? And to return it to the owner with her own hand—— Suddenly her troubled eye fell on the mute, humbly waiting figure before her.

After all, whom could she better trust than this old friend of her childhood, this faithful, slavish adorer who, half-crazed though he might be, carried unchanged his devotion to her as the one unswerving idea of his unsteady soul? And, after all, beside him, what choice had she? "Elmer," she said quickly, "will you do something for me?"

"If you'll let me," he replied, with the hungry fervor of a fanatic to his patron saint, "I'll die for you!"

"My poor old Elmer!" she sighed pityingly. "But it's nothing like that I want from you—it's something that may, possibly, turn out to your own advantage. Will you deliver this letter for me, please?"

"To the Hungarian prince?" he said sharply.

"No, no, indeed! To the gentleman who wrote it, and to whom it belongs, Mr. John Borridaile"—her tongue faltered tinglingly upon the syllables, with a betraying softness which she suddenly feared might reveal her weakness to the man before her. But she, intent on the details of her request, noticed nothing. "Mr. John Borridaile," she repeated bravely, "at Borridaile Court, near Ochre Point—the house is well known; you will have no trouble finding it. I want you to speak with him personally. I want you to deliver the letter into his own hand and no one else's. You understand?"

"I understand," he replied steadily. "And what do I tell him?"

"You tell him—ah!" She hesitated for a moment. "Tell him you were acquainted with one of the servants at Stormcliff; and, passing down the road last night, you spied this letter under the *porte cochère*. You showed it to one of the servants, who said that Mr. Borridaile, as secretary of the commission, would be the person most probably in correspondence with the Secretary of State. And so—Elmer, you will do this for me?"

"You know from the old days, Angie, whether you can trust me!" The pathos of his tone drew her thoughts suddenly from her own sad perplexities to his.

"My poor old friend, how selfish I have been toward you! I must go now. But first—listen! I can't bear to think of you in this terrible way of life. Elmer, if you won't be offended—I have some money saved——"

"What do you take me for?" She started back in fear from the withering indignation of his tone. Then, recovering himself, he

went on with a sudden weary droop in his voice: "You know how much life has been worth to me, Angie dear, sence that day four year ago when you said 'no' to me. I have my Cause, of course—that's somethin'. But I sometimes think ef I could jest do somethin' fer you, somethin' that would make you happy as I can't, an' die doin' it— But that's plumb foolishness. I mustn't hender you here longer, an' mebbe git you a scoldin' from your boss. Your letter 'll go to your Mr. Borridaile first thing in the mornin', never fear, an' now—good-by, Angie!"

"My poor Elmer!"—she gave him her hand. "But you have n't told me yet what I can do for you, how I——"

"Nothin'!" he interrupted her sternly. "I ain't a man for a respectable workin' girl to be seen with—an ex-jail-bird, do you hear? But you 've stopped an' talked to me fer once—you've given me the sweetness of your voice to remember—an' that's more'n I could have asked. I ain't got the right to stay no longer. Good-by again, an' God bless you, Angie!"

As suddenly as he had come, his tall, dark form melted into the blackness of the pergola. The girl, left alone upon the terrace, stood for a moment motionless in the fragrant living mystery of the night.

But that other night two weeks ago—when for the first time her poor, stunted, feeble little soul had wakened to life, before the magical words and presence of love! In that new, transfiguring brilliance the path of life had stretched almost plain before her; but now to what ruin this maze was to lead her in the end, who could tell?

But the weariness of her body quieted even the trouble of her mind. With her feet stumbling under her, almost without care whether she were discovered or not, she made her way to the deserted gardens and the darkened outer stairway that led to the locked door of her room.

Vassily, whimpering softly, welcomed her return.

XI.

TWENTY-SIX hours!

This was the first thought that came to the mind of the girl who woke in the great Pompadour bed, as her feverish glance fell upon the little gilt clock ticking upon the chimney-piece. She was free, it was true, from the intolerable inner stain which for one infamous moment she had planned; but in twenty-six hours she must face open disgrace, open ruin.

Twenty-six hours! Why, indeed, drag out this hideous suspense for that allotted time, like a condemned criminal awaiting the hour of his execution? She had saved the man whom she loved from the danger which threatened him at her own hands, she had by sacrificing her unspotted image in his heart saved at once his honor and her

own. But he would never know it; he would never know that in thus damning herself before the world she had in reality saved herself from the greater condemnation, that in falling as it seemed beneath his contempt she had in reality risen to the poor best of her feeble, passionate soul. But she knew it. In the sordid, empty years which stretched like a grim, interminable pathway before her, that knowledge would be all the light and comfort she would have—she had best make the most of it. But Jack would never know.

And to-day, to look into his honest, kindly eyes bent in adoration on her, and to figure to herself the bitter contempt which would flash from them to-morrow evening as they dwelt upon the headlines which the Hungarian had pictured to her yesterday—no, it was more, in the enfeebled nervous state produced by last night's strain, than she could bear. Twenty-six hours! Why, indeed, should this farce last more than one hour more?

To Mrs. Rumbold, accordingly, she went. That lady, propped up on innumerable little pink silk cushions, finishing her chocolate and her correspondence together, looked up with a smile of careless triumph as her guest entered her room. Her morning's mail contained so much that was flattering, so much that was delightful—and all owing to the daringly played stroke symbolized to her by the drooping, heavy-eyed beauty who, wrapped in fluttering, pale-blue draperies, came trailing softly into her room.

But the maid dismissed, the door examined and then carefully locked—ah, then! Mrs. Rumbold, sitting bolt upright among her rosy pillows, listened to a flat, unvarnished tale of failure that drove the blood from her little sharp face and brought her white teeth glistening between her whiter lips.

She had not climbed to her present position of eminence, however, without the aid of a practical nature which made her even in this desperate moment perceive the futility of wasting time in reproaches and in lamentations. Therefore, it was not in open words, but in her tone, as thin and cold as the glance of her blade-blue eyes, that she made manifest her rage and contempt for the self-confessed bungler before her.

To give up the game, to slip out of sight now, with a whole day left in which to combat the schemes of this wretched Hungarian? Never! What was the girl thinking of? Because she had failed ignominiously, must she now turn coward? Because she had made a botch of the whole affair, did that mean that Mrs. Rumbold, taking it into her capable hands, could not conduct it to success? Bah! What the man wanted was money, of course. To-night, at Mrs. Borridaile's dinner or the Eustis's baccarat party, she would take the opportunity of interviewing him, and hearing his price.

The girl, remembering Debreczin's haughty disclaimer of money-seeking on the occasion of their first interview together, relapsed into miserable doubt from the hope momentarily induced by Mrs. Rumbold's confident words. "But if," she said painfully, "he refuses to treat on such a basis—if he will not accept money as the price of his silence——"

Mrs. Rumbold tossed her head. "Don't talk like an idiot," she said sharply. "Of course this person has his cash price—like you yourself! Though I regret to tell you, young lady, that *your* check will be very considerably diminished by this enormous outlay which you might have saved and did n't. No, don't argue the matter!" She raised her voice peevishly as the girl, flushing hotly, opened her mouth to protest. "My nerves have really had all they can stand for one day; and if I'm to clear up the mess you've made of things, I think I shall need them in their best condition for to-night. You may go now!" She turned abruptly, and as the girl, as white as she had been red before, rose obediently to her feet, a faint grin wrinkled the thin lips of the lady sinking back upon her pillows. "If you ask me," she said, "who the joke is on, I should say there's not a bad one on Mrs. Borridaile, if she only knew! A professional blackmailer as a guest—h'm! Not so much better than a professional humbug, is it, my dear?"

This taunt passed, however, high like summer thunder over the suffering soul before her. To finish out the allotted span of service demanded of her, to play her part with spirit before the piercing, trustful eyes of the man she loved—here was task enough for her strength, without wasting any force in idle indignation.

It was in the evening indeed, when at his aunt's house she should see Jack for the last time, that her trial was to come. The day passed slowly, hour by hour. The routine of their usual life claimed them—a luncheon party, bridge, a motor-ride. Twenty hours before the clock stroke which should settle her fate, and cover her with infamy in the eyes of the man she loved! Never to see him again, that was hard enough, but it was all within the conditions of the game. But to think of him knowing her for the cheat she was! Eighteen hours! No, it was impossible that Mrs. Rumbold should be able to compound with the implacable Shylock who had seen his own terms rejected. After all, there was a ray of comfort for the girl: She *had* rejected those infamous terms! She had undone, at all risk to herself, the harm she had plotted against Jack. It was all confusion, all misery, but at least she had not done as much evil as she might have done. Fourteen hours!

It was eight o'clock when she sat down at the dinner-table at Mrs. Borridaile's, face to face with the eyes which had pierced, now smiling, now reproachful, through all her day's waking dream. And for that

very reason, perhaps, the eyes themselves, and the familiar voice thrilling in her ear—like the flower-wreathed table before her and the gay, gorgeous company—seemed to her no more than pigments of an exquisite, evanescent dream, from which so soon and so roughly she must be awakened.

Her awakening, however, which, though not final, was sufficiently complete, came to her even before the allotted time. It was in the drawing-room after dinner, while the party were sipping their liqueurs and waiting for the automobiles which should convey them to the baccarat party which was to follow, that Debreczin, smiling agreeably, crossed the room to join his young host and the lady who was known to the assembled company as the Grand Duchess Varvara.

She greeted his coming with a gay and resolute smile. A few commonplaces of conversation followed. Then, as though the effort were too great, the girl turned away her eyes listlessly toward the other end of the room, where Mrs. Marsten, seated at the piano, trilled little French songs with spirit and grace. Two short sentences exchanged by the two men behind her struck suddenly upon her ears:

"Any news of the missing document, my brave?"

"No."

Borridaile's tone, as he uttered his monosyllabic reply, was unfamiliar, like the voice of a stranger—grim, cold, touched with a profound but resolute despair. She clenched her hands and bit her cheeks from the inside to keep from fainting, as Debreczin's swift undertone went on:

"But go quickly and telephone again to the chief of police, my friend."

The hostess, stopping in her dignified progress across the room, addressed her nephew suddenly:

"My dear Jack, what can be detaining them at the garage? It grows late, and we promised to begin play promptly at eleven o'clock. Will you have the goodness, my dear boy, to see what delays the automobiles?"

With a bow and a brief apology, Jack was gone. His aunt stood lamenting, with affectionate solicitude, his suddenly changed looks and the anxious preoccupation which she had noticed in him to-day. "They work him like a galley-slave on that commission, upon my word! Last night he was not in his bed. All to-day——" Suddenly her eye was caught by something ghastly in the beautiful white face before her, and, throwing out her plump, soft hand, she saved the girl from falling.

"Princess!" she cried with real anxiety. "You are going to faint! Here, my dear child. Prince, ask Willis to bring a glass of water!"

Mrs Rumbold, amiably concerned, bustled up with vinaigrette and

good advice. "These heart attacks—my poor darling! You are better now?"

The girl opened her blue eyes with a little resolute smile. "Thank you all, so much! But I am quite well now. A passing twinge—sacred blue, but the evening is so warm!"

Mrs. Borridaile, relieved of her sudden anxiety, readily accepted the excuse. "Certainly, the heat of the room; these rooms are on the leeward side—here we are miserably close! My dear child, I advise you to allow Prince Debreczin to take you to the air."

The girl rose unsteadily. "Yes," she responded, "if he will be so kind!" And, stiffening her muscles so as to profit as little as possible by the willing and detested arm offered for her support, she trailed her shimmering blue draperies slowly across the room, through the glazed doorway, and out on the cool, dark piazza and wide *porte cochère* beyond.

"Now, Princess," said Debreczin with ironic courtesy, as, dropping his arm, she turned with swiftly restored forces to face him in the half-lit darkness—"now, Princess, my congratulations that you came to your senses after all——"

"Tell me!" Her choked voice interrupted his drawling words. "What does this mean? Is it possible he never received the letter?"

"And why should he have received it?"

"You know why!" she returned with energy. "Because, as I told you, I sent that letter back last night to its rightful owner!"

The Prince laughed impatiently. "Madame, I have been in America long enough to understand the game that your nation calls bluff. Do you suppose I do not see that in this pretense of having returned the letter to Mr. Borridaile you are trying to throw me off the track and evade my terms?"

"Monsieur, I have told you the truth!"

"Bah, madame! We have no time to waste. Listen! My chief grows pressing; my information must be in Petersburg by Sunday. *Mon Dieu*, madame! do you think that I enjoy any better than you do this business into which we are forced? I assure you it is all excessively painful to me—and by the very fact of my employing means so distasteful, you may perceive my desperate necessity."

"Yes."

"Come, madame, the letter! Or as noon strikes on Saturday this wretched secret of yours, this thrilling, delicious scandal of your imposture and Mrs. Rumbold's, is wired to the office of every newspaper in New York. The headlines, *ma belle*—have you thought of the headlines? And the pictures! Your friend, Monsieur Jack, will be able to cut out the picture that he so much desires!"

From beyond the wall of dark cedars below the house came the

faint, half-heard screech of an automobile. The sound seemed to recall the Prince to a sudden recollection of the moment's needs.

"Here come the machines," he said quickly. "In a moment we shall be off; we must not attract attention by lingering here. We shall have time to speak together later; and I have no doubt, by your keeping the letter for me, that we shall come to excellent terms!"

The girl bowed mechanically. A moment's solitude in which to collect her forces scattered by the unlooked for, the appalling blow dealt her by the Prince's recent words, seemed to her the utmost she could ask.

"If you would be so kind, monsieur," she said, with a deliberate though tremulous return to her *grande dame* manner, "as to bring me my wrap."

With a smile which grimly recognized the necessity of the comedy thus played between them, the Prince bowed. "Madame," he answered, "I am, as you know, always at your command!"

In a moment he had gone, and she was left standing alone in the half-lit and flower-scented veranda. Jack had never received the letter—there was the fact to which her brain must learn to adjust itself. Not only had her original misdoing been all for nothing, but her tardy restitution as well. She had stained her soul with the crimes of theft and treachery, but she had not thereby succeeded in buying her immunity from the Hungarian's threats. She had braved ruin and disgrace for herself and for the woman who had befriended her, but she had not thereby delivered the man she loved from the calamity inflicted upon him by her own hand. Jack was ruined, Mrs. Rumbold was ruined, she was ruined; and for the general mess that she had made of things, she had no one to thank but herself.

To trust so urgent, so vital, a commission to a poor, wild-witted outlaw like Elmer Morrow! For the carelessness and cowardice which had thus snatched at the first and easiest chance presented her for restoring the letter, she was now properly punished. And yet—poor Elmer, the friend of her childhood, her devoted dog and slave! Upon whom in this world, in this hard-hearted, bewildering world, could she rely, if not on him? He had protested his willingness to lay down his life for her; so why not—

She caught in her breath. His life! A chill thought trickled like melting ice into her feverish, whirling brain. His life! After all, the Hungarian had last night beheld him face to face; she knew her enemy's determination, his readiness to avail himself of all means the most unscrupulous to gain his end; was it not more reasonable to suppose that his fault, rather than Elmer's, lay at the bottom of the mystery of the undelivered letter? In that case, by what fraud or secret violence? And where was poor Elmer now?

Her despairing eyes swept the shadowy garden before her. Suddenly they remained riveted, focused in horror—on the empty air? Was it solid flesh upon which her straining glance rested, or a visualized projection of her own agonized thoughts, a mysterious and transcendental confirmation of her sudden fears?

For out from the wall of dark cedars slipped a form as dark as they. With cat-like steps across the lawn, silently drawing nearer and nearer, came the figure—that long dark coat, that high-boned, pallid face, those searching, gleaming eyes. Even in the faint light that streamed from the drawing-room behind her, there could be no room for doubt. She opened her mouth to cry his name. Then a falling gleam of light, as he crept nearer into it, swept the breath from between her lips like a sudden body-blow. For in that sudden, half-lit radiance she perceived that the man advancing so softly upon her moved with outstretched arm; and in the hand was something that shone pale and indistinct in the shifting light.

There are instants, as that in which the oarsman finds himself poised on the edge of the cataract, in which the human mind works quickly. In a swiftly darting swoop of thought, the girl's mind rushed back to this man's words of the night before, to his avowed object in coming to Newport, to his desperate, half-crazed ferocity of purpose; then in a suddenly comprehending flash her eye dropped to the magnificence of drapery which shimmered about her in the broad pale bar of light that fell from the window; to the glittering orders upon her breast, to the betraying strings of sapphires which swung and rippled around her like liquid lapis-lazuli. For whom was she taken by the desperate fanatic before her? To what fate had he devoted her? She knew.

She knew, but she stood motionless, silent. To address Elmer by his name, to discover to him her real personality—this would mean to evoke an immediate and hideous scandal, to rob Mrs. Rumbold of her last desperate chances of success. On the other hand, to cry for the help which lay ready in the house before her—what could that mean but to bring other human beings, defenseless and unsuspecting, into the circle of death wherein she stood? If it should be Jack who came to her call! No, her fate was her fate, she would meet it alone.

After all, what did she lose? Was this not perhaps the true solution? For her who had made of life so grotesque and insoluble a tangle, was not death the open door of escape? The dark shape crept nearer, nearer. She shut her eyes.

"Good-by, Jack," she whispered softly to herself. And with head gallantly uplifted she stood facing death with a smile.

XII.

IN her ears sounded a suddenly pulsating roar, through her closed lids flashed a blinding vermilion in the glare of a sudden flash. "This is the end!" she said to herself. Then,

"Princess!" cried a voice near her—a dear, well-known voice. Opening her eyes, she saw Jack leaping down toward her from behind the acetylene search-lamps of a huge, loud-roaring car. Horror for his endangered safety was her only thought.

"No, no!" she cried with a desperate gesture. "Don't come near me—no, no!"

Jack stood stock-still in hopeless bewilderment. "What?" he said. Then, following the direction of her rigidly-staring eyes, he turned toward the dark, thin form which stood behind him. The girl took in her breath. Then,

"Is this Mr. Borridaile?" asked the harsh, quick tones of Elmer Morrow.

"It is," retorted Jack grimly; then, turning with fierce solicitude toward the girl, who had shrunk back from the betraying glare of the lamps, "Has this fellow been annoying you?" he asked swiftly.

She stretched out one cold and tremulous hand, in a vain hope of drawing him away from the deadly peril before him. Morrow advanced quickly. His arm was outstretched. "No, no!" she whispered again. Then the blaze of the motor-lamps, falling upon his hand, revealed to her the white object which it held extended—not the silver wrapped missile of last night, but a letter.

She stared. Was it possible? Was it possible?

She was dimly conscious of Jack's eager leap forward, of his quick grasp which clutched the letter extended to him, of his short, deep laugh of relief. "Thank God!"

"It's yours, sir?" asked the voice of Elmer Morrow.

From Jack's face, ruddy in the kindling light, the careworn lines and pallor had already vanished, and his eyes were the eyes of a man newly-delivered from an unspeakable anxiety. The girl's heart smote her in a shame too deep for words that hers should have been the hand to inflict, if only for a few hours, such suffering upon him. And she bowed silently as Jack turned to her with a brief word of explanation and apology.

"This happens to be a rather important paper which disappeared unaccountably last night," he said, "and which has caused me some anxiety. You'll excuse me one moment while I question this man, Princess?"

Again she nodded in silence. And in a passion of gratitude, not so much for the life which Elmer Morrow had unwittingly spared to her, but for the boon more precious than life which he had brought

her, she stood listening to his glib answers to Jack's searching questions, as he repeated parrot-like the story which she herself had put in his mouth the night before.

There was a sudden step behind her, a familiar detested voice.

"Aha, my brave, here you are! Princess, here is your cloak. Allow me, madame. And, *mon Dieu*, what is this?"

Jack, glowing with delighted relief, explained his good fortune to his friend. The girl, listening to the latter's warm congratulations, almost spoiled the situation by laughing aloud. So she stood with eyes downcast, a little withdrawn into the shadows, lest a stray glance might betray her appreciation of the ironical quality of the situation. Meanwhile Jack's gentle inquisition went on:

"But tell me, my man—why, when you realized that this letter was probably of some importance, did you not return it at once?"

"Ain't I tried to?" replied Elmer, with some sullenness. "I came here this mornin', but the young chap that opened the door, he fired me out like I was askin' for somethin' instead of bringin' it. Then I tried to speak with some of the other help—turned down agin. So then I laid for you out in the road there, and when you come along in your automobile, I tried to hail you, but the cop he told me to move on——"

"And so," Jack interposed with kindly severity, "the only means left you was to come prowling over the lawn after dark, alarming the lady into the agitation I saw just now."

In suddenly kindling terror, the girl took in her breath. Poor Elmer, beyond a doubt, had done nobly; but if thus closely questioned, who could tell what he might not divulge? And that the supposed annoyance to her should be made the pretext for an inquiry which might at any moment end so disastrously for her made the present situation near to intolerable.

"Indeed, monsieur," with some impatience she addressed Jack in French, "I assure you the annoyance to me was purely imaginary."

She stopped short on the word. The French language was to her, after all, no more than the ambush of the ostrich. Often enough, in her girlhood days, the old friend before her had heard her display her accomplishment in that direction. And now if, in the incautiousness borne of sudden amazement, he should recognize and betray her—— In quick panic she turned toward the door; but her steps were almost immediately halted by the silky tones of the Hungarian's voice:

"My dear Jack, it seems to me that you take a great deal for granted. You find this man in possession of a valuable document—you find him, as you say, prowling like a thief over your grounds at night—and yet you accept his very improbable story of picking up the

letter on the driveway last night. Now, my advice to you, my dear friend, would be to have the man detained and the affair sharply looked into."

Barely checking her exclamation of amazement, the girl turned. That the Prince, who last night had so thoroughly compromised himself in Morrow's presence, should now go out of his way to urge the detention of a witness possessed of knowledge that might be his ruin! Then, as swiftly, she recognized the subtle malice of the stroke. Any testimony which Morrow might give must involve the Grand Duchess as well as the Prince; he could afford to take his chances on Morrow's silence, for the sake of the additional weapon which the man's detention and possible testimony placed in his hand. And even in the extreme case, should Morrow dare to peach on him, who would take the word of an ex-convict, and of an impostor such as herself, against a nobleman of the Prince's rank and character?

The four stood silent in a brief interim fraught for three of them with strangely thrilling possibilities, while the unconscious Jack Borridaile weighed his reply:

"It is possible, Prince, that you may be right. See here, my good chap"—he turned to the silent Elmer, waiting motionless in the dark—"you have done me a great service, the promised reward is at your disposal. But, you understand, there is something a bit fishy about all this! I regret to say I shall have to have you detained and the details of the matter looked into. Your friend among Mrs. Rumbold's servants, for instance——"

In a moment's dizziness the girl swayed against the vine-covered pillar of the veranda. To do her justice, it was the peril to Elmer, the ungrateful reward which by her means was now being dealt out to him for his faithful and difficult fulfilment of her trust, that weighed like tragedy upon her soul. But even in that desperate and generous panic self-preservation was not entirely forgotten. The bare thread of possible escape, held out by Mrs. Rumbold's coming negotiations with the Prince—how completely it must be rent and snapped by any detailed inquisition of poor Elmer, by any such search among the Stormcliff servants as that threatened by Borridaile's words! Forgetting the immediate risk in the greater danger looming behind, disregarding, above all, any peril to herself in the undeserved punishment threatening the faithful old friend who unknowingly stood before her, she stepped desperately forward into the blazing white light of the acetylene motor-lamps.

"Mr. Borridaile," she said breathlessly, "if it is on my account that you intend to punish this man who has done you so great a service—then, I beg you, understand clearly that he has been guilty of no offense toward me! But rather, if you take me into consideration at

all in the matter, let me plead as his advocate! I am perhaps meddling with matters beyond my concern, but you see——” For one moment her lips halted on the words framed for them by her flying brain; there came the second thought—why not? One falsehood the more—what could it matter? And, besides, were her words so very untrue, after all? “You see, monsieur, at home I see so much of injustice, so much of cruelty—here, at least, let me see mercy! To me his story sounds most reasonable. Give him your thanks, monsieur, and his reward, and let him go!”

In Jack’s gaze, bent upon her in the keen radiance of the search-light, she beheld a generous admiration of her ardor, a glad surrender to her request. She turned to Elmer—their eyes met. The blaze of light made any sign of weakness on her part an impossible thing; but her heart stood still as she read in his glance a complete and astounded intelligence.

In that revealing moment, he had recognized her! She lowered her eyes helplessly. Her secret lay at the mercy of this poor wretch’s incautious word, of his irrepressible amazement. With swift resolution she forced her careless gaze back to that dark glance, bent upon her from beyond the white radiance of the lamps. Then, like light flashing from the edge of a knife, she beheld his swift eyes travelling to the tall form of the Prince beside her. In that keen secret glance, as plainly as on a printed page, she read Morrow’s recognition of his last night’s opponent, his recollection of her own words, his perfect understanding which suddenly pieced together the scattered and baffling elements of the fantastic situation into one comprehended whole. She held her breath tight against her laboring heart—now, surely, the end must come! But the necessity of loyalty, in the unsteady soul before her, served to clamp even its wild amazement in the shackles of silence. Her breath came fluttering back to her lips. Elmer, who had asked no better than to serve her, had indeed served her well! Jack’s voice cut in on the whirl of her thoughts.

“You are right, madame,” he said briefly. “Here, my man, I formally retract any doubts I may have expressed of you. You are free to go and come as you choose. To-night, as you see, I am engaged; but come at twelve to-morrow and you will find your check ready for you—with my best thanks. You have done me an incalculable service, I can assure you.”

The stranger’s voice broke hollowly over the pent-up storm of emotion which one of his listener’s, at least, knew to be raging beneath his shabby and half-concealed exterior. “All right, sir”—his tone, though broken, was full of a resolute independence; “though before you talked of suspectin’ me, you might have found whether I was after your check—which I ain’t, you see. Thank you jest the same,

but you won't see me in the mornin'." With a sudden stiffening of his lank form, he turned away from Jack's protests, to the girl still standing rigid in the light.

"Thank you, lady," he said simply. Pity was in his haggard eyes—pity, an anguish of helpless concern, of inextinguishable yearning. "I don't understand, but I know you're in trouble," his eyes said, like the mournful eyes of a faithful spaniel. "I'd give my life to serve you, but there's nothing I can do."

She bowed gravely, to conceal the betraying moisture which flashed responsively into her eyes. The next moment Elmer had melted into the darkness as silently and mysteriously as he had come.

"Upon my word!" said Borridaile, with a long breath of bewilderment. Then as with a caressing touch he fingered the precious document just restored to him, "I was a brute to that poor chap!" he burst out regretfully. "To-morrow I must have him searched for, if only to make my apologies. I owe it to you, Princess, that I am not guilty of worse ingratitude toward him. You were right; I admit. But then, when are n't you right?"

A flare of soft rosy light poured from the suddenly opened door behind them, mingling with the blue-white blaze in which they stood. Soft voices and laughter broke the ominous and rustling stillness of the night. In a moment the *porte cochère* swarmed with the chattering members of the dinner company, with footmen and chauffeurs, and automobiles arriving from the garage. Jack added a hurried word to his last speech:

"One moment, Princess—I must go at once to telephone my chief of this fortunate find, and send word to the police. Beyond a doubt, this is my lucky night." For one moment his eyes rested in hers, and uncontrollably, poignantly, her eyes answered him. "Yes," he said beneath his breath, "in spite of everything, Princess—this is my lucky night!"

As they turned toward their automobiles, Mrs. Rumbold halted for one instant to pin up a dark curling lock in her imperial guest's coiffure, slightly ruffled by the damp night breeze.

"You have come to no arrangement with the Prince?"—her whisper was as cold and as barely perceptible as her touch. "Very well, then; now it is my turn. We will see if I make the same failure as you!"

XIII.

THE next morning's sun, peering through the dark silk blinds of the Grand Duchess's apartment, wakened its occupant from a short and feverish sleep. From his white fur rug beside her bed, Vassily rose up yawning and stretching his long limbs, like another white fur rug

suddenly quickened into life. "Get up, lazy mistress," his blue eyes seemed to say. "Get up, come outdoors, and play with me!"

But from his innocent and engaging glances his mistress's eyes shot fiercely to the clock on the mantelpiece.

Seven o'clock—only five hours now! She sat bolt upright against her pillows, all sleep smitten from her by the returning horror of that creeping danger whose presence never left her, day or night.

Why, last night, had she so far yielded to the weakness of the flesh, in the exhaustion borne of her long-continued strain, as to allow herself to be urged home from the baccarat-party by the over-attentive Borridaile, before her hostess was ready to accompany her? Why had she not at all risks, at all hazards, learned last night from Mrs. Rumbold's own lips the outcome of her interview with the antagonist who held her fate in his pitiless hands? Was it not, plainly speaking, mere cowardice that had urged her to cherish, as long as might be possible, the vain and pitiful hope held out to her by her hostess's over-confident attempt? The hope was indeed atrophied to the point of nothingness; still, it was a chance, a bare chance. And now—how long must it be before she could decorously gain admission to Mrs. Rumbold's carefully guarded apartment? Two hours at the least. In this sleepless, torturing suspense, how pass those wearily dragging moments?

To her ears came, as though in answer, the twitter of the birds and the faint, half-heard murmur of the sea. In an irrepressible impulse that touched her hurt soul with the comfort of balm, she leaped from her bed. And in an incredibly short space of time she was tubbed, curled, and dressed, and flying with Vassily, past the sentinel Petroff, down beneath the stone arches of the great staircase outside her window.

Though the sun was already far up from the horizon, the closed blinds of the villa told of a household sunk in sleep, and the grounds were deserted save for the silent gardeners who moved with rake and mowers over the green, velvety lawn. On rose-trees and laburnums hung the spangled wetness of the dew, and the still air was touched with the clear freshness of the early morning. For one moment the girl stood smiling at the blue sky, the unwrinkled sea, and the white gulls which swooped in swift aerial circles over the sparkling green vines of the pergola. She moved enmeshed in a dark net of falsehood and intrigue which she herself had woven, she stood face to face with the imminence of open disgrace, her heart was seared and stinging with the flame of a love as impossible as it was real and passionate. But nevertheless she and the morning were young together, and all about her was the living fragrance of the sea.

By one-half of her blood, at least, she came of a race to which for generations the smell of salt water had been as the breath of life.

And now, in the lonely stillness of the early morning, it seemed to her that she found herself suddenly face to face, not with her feeble, tormented self, but with a dear friend long familiar, with a great mother that could never fail her. Upon her soul knocked the echo of half-remembered words—"There is no sorrow but the sea can drown." And, drawn by the lure of an inward yearning hardly less deep and living than the torments of love and fear that urged her restless feet, she flew down the wet marble steps toward the shimmering watery floor below her.

With the dog leaping beside her, she entered the walled enclosure of the little artificial harbor where, motionless between high curving breakwaters, Mr. Rumbold's fleet of crack racers and dandy pleasure-boats lay waiting at their moorings. Floating beside the white stone steps, as though left expressly as a temptation for the first comer, was a slim, pale-green canoe.

In a moment's hesitation, the girl stood surveying it; while Vassily, dipping his feathery white paw in the water, gazed at her wistfully. "Dear old *chéri*," she said regretfully, "I love you so much, but a little canoe is hardly the place for a big dog like you. Lie down, good puppy, lie down! You'll wait for your mistress, won't you?"

She bent to pick up the paddle which lay convenient in the bow of the little craft. Below her feet tinkled the faint, hollow music of the almost imperceptible ripples. "All sorrows," she whispered to herself, "even my sorrows, you can drown, my dear old sea—whether I sail over your beautiful surface or lie asleep beneath it. Come, little boat! We are going to take a voyage together, you and I!"

XIV.

THIS was not the first morning that Jack Borridaile, under the sting of a sharper necessity than that of sleep, had returned to float wistfully over a certain portion of the bay whence, like Romeo, he could gaze upon a certain balconied window. And this morning, newly released as he was from the grinding anxieties which yesterday had threatened the abrupt and disgraceful termination of his career, he had set out on his early sail with a heart for the moment almost as gay as a boy's. To be sure, as his aunt had significantly said to him only last night, Endymion was in his grave and the moon was as far out of reach as ever; but the Grand Duchess, for all her imperial rank, was no cold moon-goddess, but a living, breathing woman. Only last night, as her dear blue eyes had met his— Suddenly he took in his breath; for at that moment, like some dazzling incarnation of his secret visions, from between the high walls of the breakwater flashed the sudden phantom of Varvara.

Her paddle fell in her lap, and she sat staring at him, her eyes

shining wide, the color coming and going in her cheeks, a beautiful apparition. Jack pushed the tiller down hard in his slow drifting craft, and rushed to lean over the side of the gunwale nearest the breakwater. "Good-morning," he called softly, cautiously, in a vague fear that any clumsiness on his part might blur the vision and bring him back to unwelcome wakefulness. "Good-morning," he called softly, "Duchess of Dreams!"

For an instant he saw her breath flutter beneath her red mouth and the white folds that hid her bosom; then a burst of laughter, oddly hysterical though it might be, brought him to a delightful conviction of his own wakefulness and of her reality. "Good-morning, Ivan Alexandrovitch!" she cried in a voice which, though a trifle unsteady, was as sweet to his ears as ever. "I am just starting for home, by the shortest sea-route. Where are you bound, may I ask?"

"For Odessa!" answered Jack promptly; then with all the persuasiveness that he could force into his tone: "Come aboard, Princess! My armored cruiser will ferry you over in half the time of that small torpedo-boat of yours!"

She sat motionless with the paddle in her lap, still staring at him, while the two small crafts slid slowly together in the smooth and oily tide. "I've left my poor Vassily alone on the shore—I promised him that I would be back soon. Besides—oh, no, I can't, monsieur! Don't you understand I can't?"

"You can!" he replied with determination. "Whatever the case might be in Russia, here in happy America I can assure you upon my honor there's no reason why we should n't take a little morning sail together and let Vassily wait a few moments more. I'm like Mohammed—I can't come to you with no wind to fill my sails, but you have a paddle in your mountain there. Ah, Princess, please come!"

Still she confronted him, hesitating. For the first time he was struck by the pallor of her cheeks and the dark circles that ringed her beautiful eyes. Man-like, his thoughts flow to the most obvious explanation. "See here," he said seriously. "There's another good reason. You're looking pale, Princess. Now, I'll venture to say you have n't eaten an atom of breakfast yet this morning!"

She shook her head with a weary little smile.

"Come aboard and have breakfast, please!" he urged boyishly.

With a little gesture of surrender, as though further resistance lay beyond her strength, the girl before him lowered her paddle in a sharp cut of the green water. A few strokes brought her within the range of Jack's alertly waiting boat-hook. He extended his hand—lightly she leaped aboard.

A moment later the green canoe trailed bumping at the stern

of the drifting white knockabout. And the skipper, delightedly doing the honors of his craft, spread the broad taffrail with tinned quail and English biscuit and every kind of cheese that was over invented in France.

"I'm not an army—you need n't turn out your whole commissariat for me, monsieur!" cried his guest in ineffectual protest as, with an obvious determination to reward his eager friendliness, she turned her languid appetite toward the sandwiches which he busily prepared.

To have her there as his guest, all to himself, in the solitude of the morning, seemed to Jack so delightful that for the moment he forgot all about the doubts and the tormenting certainties which usually oppressed him in her beloved presence.

"Look!" she cried suddenly, shading her bright eyes with her hand. And Jack, becoming for the first time aware of a whimpering, splashing sound that filled the air, looked back toward Mr. Rumbold's harbor in the direction indicated. Trailing a sparkling wake of bubbles, a sharp white and black nose cut the water like the fin of some swiftly following shark. And in a moment two beseeching blue eyes looked up from the green shadows beside the boat, and a wailing, clamorous voice besought humbly for admittance.

The Grand Duchess burst into reckless laughter. "Here's spirit," she said, "here's determination. Naughty Vassily, I told you to wait. Now go home, bad dog, go straight back to the steps and wait for your mistress! No, you can't come aboard. I'm sorry, but you must go home."

"No," cried Jack; "don't send him home. I sympathize with him, you see—a sort of fellow-feeling. Go forward, Princess, so he shan't wet you."

"But you can't lift him, that enormous creature!" she protested as he rolled up his sleeves and leaned over the side of the boat.

"Can't I?" he retorted, with pardonable pride. And a moment later, as the Grand Duchess, laughing, took quick advantage of the shelter of the sail—a half-minute later, a shining, silvery monster showered the deck with his flying spray, and ecstatically licked the brown hands which had so effectively befriended him.

"Good dog," said Jack, rubbing the wet nose caressingly. "And now don't soak your mistress, that's all I ask of you, and don't trample those sandwiches. Here's a biscuit for you—do you care for biscuits? And now lie down here in the sun and get dry."

"Dear dog!" said his mistress tenderly, as she stroked the glistening head beside her. "The gentleman is very good to us, is n't he?" She glanced up at Jack, with a flicker of tragic seriousness in her large eyes. "You are strong, monsieur, like two men! And you have

the kindest heart in the world, I think," she finished in a little quick undertone, as though thinking aloud. But before Jack could reply, her mood had changed again, and she began to feed Vassily with sandwiches.

With a little frank gesture, uncoquettish as a child, she dragged from her arms the long gloves that hid their whiteness, and tossed them, together with her broad lingerie hat, into the cockpit of the boat.

"I don't mind the sun," she answered Jack's unspoken warning; "it never burns me, and, besides, here I am in the shadow of the sail. Oh, lovely, lovely morning!"

She stretched out her two white arms toward the little fleecy clouds that dotted the sky above her. Her black hair, released from the concealing screen of the wide ruffled hat, showed red lights in the sunlight, and little dark rings that curled softly against the creamy skin of her neck. She seemed a creature ineffably young and fresh and living. Jack, staring at her, closed his jaw in the strength of a sudden purpose. After all, she was no more than a woman; and had he the courage of his life, he was no less than a man!

"Ah, monsieur," she cried, "you don't know, it is impossible, really, that you should know, how delicious this is for Vassily and me, to find ourselves floating here for one moment of freedom on the beautiful wide sea! All my griefs and shames and bitter, grinding memories—I've left them behind me on the shore where they belong! And out here on the salt water, with the sound of it and the smell of it all about me, and the swaying rhythm of it under my feet, I dare to be myself again. For this one little moment between the past that I leave behind me and the future that waits for me, I'm myself, and I'm alive—I'm alive!" But her voice went high and thrilling, the words were torn from her, it seemed, as though by some other power than her own free will. With a little wild gesture, she clasped her white hands above the curling shadows of her hair. "Ah, this world is a glorious place!" she said, and, like the blaze of a salt-sprinkled fire, her long eyes shot their sudden blue flames at Jack. "This world is a better place than the heaven they tell us of!" she cried again. "And to think I never knew it until this moment!"

Slowly Jack rose to his feet. The tiller, freed from his restraining hand, swung back and forth as the boat rocked in the long rollers of the tranquil sea. "Madame," he said with blunt determination, "if, as you say, you are happier here than you are at home, then why do you go home?"

She sat staring at him, her hands still twisted among the dark tendrils of her hair. Over her expressive face flickered a curious change, a faint shadow as of fear. Then with a little careless laugh,

"The world is a glorious place," she repeated, "to play in, monsieur! But when the game is played out, you see, we must all go home at last!"

At the faintly touched mockery of the speech, with its application so evidently designed for him, Jack set his teeth in sudden fixity of purpose. She was an imperial princess, this girl who sat with airy balance and laughing eyes upon the gunwale of his knockabout; about her delicate form was drawn a charmed ring, invisible, perhaps, in the healthy sunlight of the morning, but none the less existent and impassable. Jack spoke not in hope, but simply because he had passed the point where resistance and suppression were possible.

"So it has been only a game to you, Princess?" he said quietly. "To me—well, it has n't been play for me, that's all. And for the rest of it, I have the most curious sensation that where you are, that's my home."

"Oh, don't!" she cried, with a swift change of voice and a sudden quivering gesture. "Don't, please don't!"

He stood staring down at her as she crouched upon the taffrail beside her great dog, her hand outstretched as though in warning and her large eyes fixed imploringly on his face. She looked very little, somehow, very helpless and very sorrowful, and his tone was gentle with the sweetness and the pain of a new-born hope as he answered her slowly:

"No, madame, I will say nothing, you can be sure, to give you pain. But what harm can it do, even to an imperial princess, to hear a man tell her—only once—that he loves her with all the strength and honesty of his heart!"

"Oh, don't!" she said again, with a sharp intake of her breath. "You must n't say so . . . I must n't listen to you . . . it's all so impossible. Don't you see it for yourself?"

She turned toward him piteously, and at the sight of the weakness in her quivering face his heart was touched with sudden self-forgetful compensation. "I see," he said gravely; "and all the more, I beg your forgiveness. You mean . . . it is impossible?"

She nodded, and her chin quivered. An overmastering impulse drove Jack on to turn the knife in the wound which ran already so deep in his heart. "But if it were n't impossible," he said quickly, "then you mean—you mean——"

She lifted her face and tried to speak; and over the unspoken words which her trembling lips refused to frame she smiled at him.

"Varvara!" he said very softly; then, rising to his feet in sudden purposeful strength, he took her hand in both of his.

"Then why should it be impossible?" he cried in quick resolve. "If you love me, is there anything in the world that is impossible?"

If we love each other, where in the world is the power to keep us apart? Beside the fact of our love, what is name, or rank, or all these foolish inventions that we like to make ourselves miserable about? Tell me, dear, is it true, do you really love me?"

She looked at him, still silent, and nodded slowly. Then as she heard his answering breath, and felt his grasp tighten upon her hand,

"But what does that matter?" she cried in a little weeping voice which thrilled his heart. "Whether we love each other or not, we are still a thousand miles away from each other. Ah, *mon Dieu!*" she broke out with sudden wildness—"the chains—the chains, if you knew of them, that hold me down!"

Across Jack's troubled mind smote the blackness of a sudden thought. In spite of himself, his mind ran back, with a curious instinct of self-torture, to his jealous pangs of the first night that he had met her, and to her own anguished outburst at the recollections evoked by the ambassador's words. Was it the dead grand duke, in his far-off imperial tomb, that stood between them? For the thousandth time he rebelled in grudging inward fury against the fact of her widowhood. No matter how well he loved her, he could never be the first! "You are thinking of—your husband?" he asked painfully.

"No!" she answered with a shiver, as she withdrew her hand from his.

"You will tell me the truth?" he persisted gently. "When you speak of the obstacles between us, you are thinking perhaps of some barrier more vital and painful even than the difference of rank? There is—some one that stands between us?"

She averted her head. "You'll know all about it soon enough," she returned; "soon, soon enough!"

"But must I wait till then?" he pleaded sadly. "Can't you give me that much of your confidence, dear? Tell me—is there any one you have left behind you in Europe, and must go back to again?"

She shook her head with a little dreary laugh. "Oh, no," she answered; "not that, indeed!"

"Then," he persisted, "some one—in America?" She was silent. His tormented fancy ran back over the past two weeks, to the admirer dangling always at her elbow, conspicuous not only for his devotion, but by the fact that he alone, in the Western world, was of rank conceivably admitted by her as equal to her own. "Not——" he hesitated—"not Debreczin?"

She turned back to him, trying to smile, trying to deny. But the betraying blood, which under the stress of this inquisition had forsaken her face, came back to it in a rush of distressful scarlet.

"I see," said Jack quietly; "then here is the long-sought explana-

tion why you were allowed to come to our barbarous America. You are to marry Prince Debreczin."

She found her voice. "No, no, indeed!" she cried in an explosion of the distress pent up within her. But the denial served in no way to lift the cloud from the gloomy eyes which Jack bent upon her.

"Varvara," he said, "if it is admitted that we love each other, then there can be no question of impertinent curiosity between you and me. I demand, I think, no more than I have a right to know, when I ask you this mysterious tie between Debreczin and you, this hold of his which gives him the power to stand between you and me—" He stopped abruptly. A dark thought, unspoken, almost unthought, cast its flickering shadow for one instant between them.

She sprang to her feet. Vassily, whimpering, thrust his cold nose into her outstretched hand.

"No, no!" she cried. "No, nothing like that! I'm not wicked, indeed! I can't bear to have you think—" She broke off suddenly, staring at him, while from her kindling features, as from a wind-blown lantern, the sustaining radiance sank and died. "No," she added in a quiet despair which overbore his breathless protests—"no, think of me as you please. However wicked you believe me, you can't think me as worthless a sinner as I really am. Oh, you'll know, you'll know soon enough!—and all I ask of you, when you hear the whole shameful truth, is, out of all this love you offer me, to give me just a little charity."

Borridaile, putting out his sunburned hand, took her trembling white fingers in his firm clasp. "Princess," he said sturdily, "I admit I cannot understand your words, but I can do better than that: I can read your eyes, I can understand your soul. My diplomatic training has not been long, perhaps, but it has given me some insight into men and things; and, besides, there is in these things an instinct that cannot deceive us. You tell me of your sins. I tell you that here is your first one, in telling me what is not true! On the purity and faith of your soul, though you and Debreczin and the court of Russia assure me of a thousand mysteries to the contrary, I stand ready to stake me my life and all I have. Varvara, listen to me!"

With a little shuddering sigh she drew her hand from his. "I don't know," she said, "whether you are moved by my reasons, but the reasons themselves, at least, remain unmoved and immovable! Ah, *mon Dieu!*" she cried with a little quick break in her voice, "what's the use of talking about it any more? Let us go home!"

Even in the dumb perplexity of his suffering her last words recalled Jack to a sudden sense of his surroundings. Looking out upon the world about him, he became conscious that a light wind had caught the sail, and his boat was sliding quickly past cliffs and cluster-

ing cottages towards the white line of Bailey's Beach. In a moment he had pushed down the tiller, drawn in the sheet, and pointed the knockabout's nose by the wind for the green point of Stormcliff. The light craft heeled to the breeze, the faint air freshened and drove her over the long wrinkling rollers that swung in slowly from the sea.

The Grand Duchess, perched high upon the windward rail, looked down upon Jack with eyes whose dumb anguish seemed strangely out of harmony with the jaunty airiness of her position. "Let us go home," she said again.

Jack looked at her in wonder. "Yes," he said under his breath; "it's true, I think. If it's no more than the force of my love compelling yours, I do believe that you care a little bit for me!" Then as she turned her head away, with a little glistening line of wetness marking the curving outline of her cheek, Jack leaped to his feet in a sudden heat of determination.

"Princess," he said in a quick changed voice, "do you know how to sail a boat?"

She nodded, with a little sad look of surprise and perplexity. Then suddenly she started, as a dull, muffled roar came over the water. Jack laughed excitedly.

"No," he said; "not like that fool of a yachtsman—I won't ask you to weigh anchor or to fire off the cannon, Princess! But come here—take the tiller!"

With a little wondering glance, she slid from her airy perch and obeyed; and with careful paws her dog followed her. Jack, standing beside her, pointed with his hand at the long, low-lying point across the bay.

"Look there, Princess," he said. "You see that distant shore, with the rocky point and the village beyond?"

She nodded, still wondering; and, swayed towards him by the motion of the leaping boat, she waited silently for his next words.

"That village, madame, is known as Little Compton," Jack went on with an odd, masterful tone in his voice. "Not indeed that that fact is worthy of being called to your attention, but if you will look again you will see a church spire—a little white spire that points up through the trees beyond the windmill. You see the church spire, Princess?"

"Yes," she answered; "I see it."

"And you know, Princess," Jack went on—"no, don't turn your head away, I beg you! You know, perhaps, what miracle can be done in a church—even in a little white village church of New England? Answer me, I beg!"

Again she nodded, this time slowly and hesitatingly; and in spite

of her evident inward suffering a sudden color dyed her wet cheeks with its mounting carmine. Jack surveyed her in sudden ecstasy.

"Yes," he said in triumph; "you do care! Princess, you come of good old fighting stock; are n't you brave enough, for the sake of something that is very sweet and precious to us both, to break through those chains, and throw away your title and your royalty and your castle in Lithuania that bores you so, for the sake of the love that I have for you, and you have—yes, you cannot deny it!—for me? What else in life, Varvara, is worth thinking of, but just that love? And is n't it a more terrible thing to think of facing life without it, all alone, than to brave the anger and the indignation of the Emperor, six thousand miles away? When you are my wife, dear—don't you see?—you'll be an American, too, and we can defy the power of all the Russias to lay a finger on you! As for Debreczin,—I snap my fingers at Debreczin! These mysterious sins of yours—I'll take the burden of them on my shoulders! Your sins? Pshaw! We'll seal them up in a dispatch-box with your sapphires and your diamond cross and your stars and orders and medals, and send them back, express paid, to his Imperial Majesty. And I'll buy you more jewels, dear, bigger and prettier—I'll buy you such lots more!"

She stood blushing, trembling, hesitating. With a sudden gesture of determination, Jack seized her unsteady hand and closed the soft white fingers over the straining stick of the helm.

"There before you, straight before you as our course points now," he said excitedly, "is the church at Little Compton, where with this breeze we can be in a half-hour. Keep her as she goes, Varvara, and inside of an hour you will be my wife, and I'll be your husband, to take care of you and fight for you before the whole world. That's what it will mean, Varvara, if you keep her on her course across the bay. But, on the other hand, if you choose, you can put the tiller hard down and bring her about—back to Newport, and the court of Russia, and the chains again. Here, madame the admiral, the ship is yours!"

With a little eager laugh that caught curiously in his throat, he turned away. "I'll sit in the cock-pit with Vassily here," he said, "and we'll leave everything to you. My dearest," he cried in a sudden outburst of triumphant tenderness, "my dearest, I defy you to bring this boat about!"

With a final glance at the bright figure with the melting eyes and the dusky, wind-blown hair, he sank from his tall height to a long-legged knot, to dispute the small floor space with the huge Vassily. The dog, whose white coat was already dry and glistening in the sun, surveyed him with friendly blue eyes and the offer of a slender pointed paw.

"Your little missus is taking us on a journey, my dear dog," Jack confided to him in a happy undertone. "Then you'll be my dog, too, you see, and she'll be my missus, do you understand? Give us your paw, good old chap. We're going to be *such* friends!"

Suddenly the sloping floor beneath him swayed and wavered, then righted itself to level. With a flapping of canvas and a clatter of block and halyard, the boat stood for an instant quivering in the eye of the wind. Then her white sail swung over and filled away, the green water rose to her leeward rail; and, leaping over the long, slow rollers, the knockabout stood on her homeward tack, back to the Newport shore again.

XV.

LETTY RUMBOLD, who had as usual been out for the early morning horseback exercise recommended for her stout figure, came lumbering heavily up the wide staircase of the central hall. With impatient fingers she rapped upon her mother's door. Then following volcanically upon the knock, she entered the spacious and flowery room where that lady, instead of reclining lazily upon her pink silk cushions as usual at this hour, was sitting bolt upright, talking excitedly into the telephone. Her haggard eyes commanded her amazed daughter to silence.

"Very well, Jim—then you'll see the *Evening Flier* and the *Hurricane* and *Town Tidbits* . . . You're afraid it's no use? Offer them anything, Jim, anything! . . . But there are others that can't be squared? You advise a trip to the Far East on the Lotus? . . . No, Jim, we must stand our ground. Oh, I shall die of shame, I know I shall! Good heavens, my dear, do what you *can*!"

With a brief word of farewell that ended in an exclamation of despair, Mrs. Rumbold flung the little glittering instrument upon the bed. In sudden wonder, Letty surveyed the dark-ringed eyes and haggard lips before her. "Whatever have you eaten, mamma," she inquired practically, "to make you look so ill?"

Her mother continued to stare at her with unseeing eyes; then coming suddenly and peevishly to herself: "Well, Letty? Don't stand staring there—what is it?"

A word was sufficient to unlock the bubbling fountain of news before her. "Oh, mamma, I've just been down on the terrace, and I saw Jack Borridaile's knockabout coming in from a sail. And who do you suppose he helped out and rowed ashore—and kissed her hand, right on the harbor steps—who do you suppose?"

For a moment her mother's wandering eyes were focused in sudden attention. "Not," she asked—"not the Grand Duchess?"

"I do mean just that," retorted Miss Rumbold in an aggrieved tone, "and you know I always told you he was falling head-over-heels

in love with her, the artful thing. Of course men are always fascinated with these foreigners—and what chance could I have, beside a widow?"

To these reproaches of her ungrateful offspring, Mrs. Rumbold made no response. "Well, she can't marry him, that's one thing sure!" she observed briefly.

"It's all very well talking, mamma," argued the injured Letty, "but if you had seen the way he kissed her hand . . . and then, just think of them out there in the boat together, for hours and hours. Just getting in at ten o'clock—who knows when they started?"

"Well, that's no more than a princess is privileged to do, if she chooses," responded Mrs. Rumbold, with vague but pointed charity. "But as for marrying, you know, my dear child, that that is out of the question." With a sudden gesture which sent the pillows flying in a rosy flurry about her, she flung out a despairing hand.

"Out of the question?" she cried. "Everything is out of the question now—we're finished, done for! What do these foolish little details matter now, when everything is going smash around us?"

Letty stared. "Has papa gone long on a falling market again?" she asked practically.

Mrs. Rumbold wailed on her bed. "Worse than that, my child—my poor, ruined darling!"

"Shall I send Céline to you, mamma?" asked Letty calmly. "You are very ill."

With an effort, Mrs. Rumbold pulled herself together again. "You may speak to Céline," she returned briefly, "and tell her to go to the Grand Duchess's apartments, and ask her Imperial Highness to have the graciousness to pay me a short call. Tell her to say my head is so excessively bad this morning!"

"You are going to speak to her about Jack Borridaile—that's good!" Letty exclaimed with satisfaction, as she turned away to do her mother's bidding.

In a few moments the expected guest, with face smiling but white as the glistening linen of her gown, was ushered into the room by the deferential maid.

"Good-morning, Duchess. So many thanks for this favor!"

"Good-morning, dear madame. Do I have the unhappiness to see you ill?"

"A mere migraine, a nothing. Céline, place a chair for her Imperial Highness. Will you sit down, dear Duchess? Céline, you may go."

A moment's silence, a swift examination of doors, a cautious slipping of bolts, and Mrs. Rumbold, with her flowered pink dressing-gown flouncing about her, came flying back to her waiting visitor. The girl,

with one hand laid upon her throat to control its laboring cords, rose to confront her.

"I see it in your eyes, madame," she observed quietly, "what I knew all along. Prince Debreczin refused to listen to you."

Mrs. Rumbold's answer, though no louder than a whisper, tore the air like a cry.

"He denied the whole business to my face! He declared the offer of money was an insult—that, having discovered our fraud, it became his duty to the widow of his friend Alexieff to expose the whole affair. The news goes back to Russia, it goes to the New York papers, at noon to-day, do you hear that? To-day!"

The girl sat silent, numbed by the crushing blow that loomed so close it seemed to have already fallen. In reproaches and lamentations Mrs. Rumbold's voice swept on:

"When everything was going so beautifully—when I had climbed so far and attained so much"—with a despairing gesture she swept the heap of monogrammed and crested correspondence lying scattered on the lace coverlid before her, visible sign and symbol of her social triumph—"when I had gained *this*, comes this heartless, sneaking wretch, like a housemaid with her broomstick, and sweeps the whole business away like a spider's web! And to think, if it weren't for him, for him, the one human being in this world to see through our little ruse—! Why did he come to Newport? Why did he ever tell me he knew no Russian, and had never laid eyes on the Princess Varvara? Why can't he hold his wretched tongue? Why could n't you do what he wanted you to, you obstinate girl? Or, failing that, why could n't you have killed him where he stood, before you allowed him to bring this ruin on Mr. Rumbold and Letty and me?"

The girl bowed her head in patient and acquiescent suffering, then mechanically her unhappy glance went to the little Dresden clock beside Mrs. Rumbold's bed.

Ten o'clock! Only two hours now until—until—— She shivered at the thought as at the touch of a cold wind. From the clock-face it seemed to her that Debreczin's heavy-lidded eyes leered out at her with a triumphant impassivity, like those of Fate. Like Destiny herself, he held her love, her honor, her life itself, between his slowly moving hands; and, like Destiny, he knew neither pity nor pause. Until this moment she had not known how strong, in spite of the Hungarian's fantastic protestations of his honor and his tale of the penalty lying over his own head in case of failure, had been her faith in the power of Mrs. Rumbold's money.

"I am sorry," she said helplessly; "but I expected no less than to hear you had failed with him. He told me, you see, that all the money in Newport would be useless as the price of his own safety;

and, consequently, that he would accept from me as the price of my own immunity nothing less than the service which he demanded of me."

"And yet," cried Mrs. Rumbold fiercely, "you refused to pay!"

The girl moved her head wearily. "I could n't," she answered.

"Could n't," repeated the other woman, with scorn, "after I had picked you up out of the gutter, and covered you with gold, and trusted you—yes, trusted you! Here you could n't put out your hand to save me from the ruin that you yourself have brought on me! Very well, then—is there any reason why I should put out my hand to save you?"

The girl's face, white before, took on a curious rigidity of line and tint. "Madame," she said, with dignity, "as I told you yesterday, I am willing to disappear at any moment, and rid you of my presence forever. From the self-reproach and useless sorrow that I take with me, how could you save me?"

"Indeed!" sneered Mrs. Rumbold. "You are willing to disappear, are you, and leave me alone to bear the brunt of the exposure that's coming down on us to-night? I've just spoken on the long-distance with Mr. Rumbold in New York, to ask him to see the editors of the evening papers, and find out what they'll take for keeping still. But he himself admits it's useless—if not one, then another, then the whole hideous crowd of them, will be on my shoulders with pictures and headlines: 'Mrs. Rumbold's Little Game on Newport Society'—'Fake Duchess Queens It in Our Exclusive Set'—and ghastly things like that, shouted at the street corners and giggled over at every dinner in Newport—this very night! This very night!"

She wrung her hands. In helpless misery the girl turned toward her—Mrs. Rumbold cut her short.

"Listen to me, Miss Hooper! You plan to run off and leave me to bear the disgrace alone? No! I have it all planned out—you are an impostor, a stray French adventuress who happens to resemble the Duchess—who got wind of the visit, who stole the jewels and came here to supplant her—a daring, skilful game that deceived even me! You will please make full confession to the police—I will give you the details later on."

The girl rose to her feet with a little suppressed cry. "The police? Mrs. Rumbold, you intend to have me arrested?"

Mrs. Rumbold's little, pointed face set itself in the hardness of steel. "How else," she said clearly, "can I make it plain to the world that I had no part in the swindling game that you have played? It makes me appear small enough that you were able to deceive me—after my intimacy with the Grand Duchess that I have talked so much about! Still, it's my only chance, to range myself with the rest of

Newport among the people that your audacity has fooled—and to cut myself off entirely from you and all your works. You can make it harder for me by denying my story if you choose—but I can promise you your ingratitude will make it none the easier for you!”

“Wait a moment,” said the girl half-inarticulately. “Wait a moment.”

Her faculties, weakened by the strain of the past few days, reeled and fainted like those of a drunkard. With a desperate effort she forced herself to a right comprehension of Mrs. Rumbold’s words.

Poverty, heart-break, the knowledge of her degradation in the eyes of the one she loved best—all these sorrows she had been prepared for. But in the loss of all that made life dear, hers had been still the inalienable right which Nature herself denies to no suffering creature—the right to drag herself away to some hidden corner, alone with her pain. But now to be pilloried in public, to be openly disgraced before all the world—before him who was more than all the world to her—

This gay game of deceit, begun in such triumphant lightness of heart—who could have foreseen with what fatal rapidity its initiate germ of falsehood would sprout and spread to contaminate the whole? In vain she had struggled against succeeding temptations as they confronted her—the primal yielding, the original and fundamental sin, had been hers. On that quagmire basis of evil, no structure but that foredoomed to ruin could ever have been erected; though this knowledge made no less bitter the realization that now the inevitable had befallen, and she was shelterless.

“Mrs. Rumbold,” she asked slowly, “you are intending to give me to the police as a swindler; to have me dragged into court with Prince Debreczin as my accuser; to have me sent to—to jail perhaps?”

“What else,” retorted Mrs. Rumbold with peevish resolution, “is left for me to do? I’m very sorry, but your ruin lies at your own door! You refused to save yourself—very well, you can’t expect to drag me down with you, you know! My right to disown your imposture is the same as that of an Alpine climber to cut the rope that binds him to a falling comrade—it will do you no good, and me a lot of harm, to go down with you. And in view of the fact that all your good luck has come from me, and all this bad luck from your own wilful obstinacy, I really think that you might promise to uphold my story in every particular. The time is so short!”—her thin voice rose feverishly. “Come, we must get our details together—will you promise?”

The girl held her head proudly erect. Resolution had come to her, resolution and a sudden kindling thought. “Madame,” she said

in a low tone, "you are right. Whatever your motive, you have been kind to me, and you have trusted me. I owe you in return all the reparation in my power for this ruin I have brought upon you. Draw up the story by which I can save you. I promise I will blacken myself faithfully in your behalf!"

"Now you are talking sense—there's a dear!" gushed Mrs. Rumbold, with a vast sigh of relief. The girl, however, interrupted her with a gesture quickly interposed.

"One moment, Mrs. Rumbold—there's a condition, one condition!" She hesitated a moment, while her listener stared. "To all the world," the girl went on painfully, "I will admit myself the vile swindler and impostor that you purpose to paint me—to all the world but one! For there's one person, you see—whom I should wish to have know the truth——"

Her voice trailed away in faltering accents of a controlled but profound suffering. Mrs. Rumbold broke into a peal of jangled laughter.

"One person!" she cried. "Hoity-toity! And who may this favored person be?"

"The one person," retorted the girl in tones of a recovered firmness, "in this world of shams and lies, who believes in me; the one who is far enough divided from me, Heaven knows, by all the barriers between us and by the evil that I have already done. He must despise me, of course, when he learns the truth; but I should like to have him know that, at least, all this was not on my side a scheme of intended evil—that careless, thoughtless, though I have been, I am at least not so sunk in sin as the published reports would make him believe. The truth, in short, as it stands between us—that is what I should wish him to know, and him alone—just enough to save a rag of his respect, a vestige of his pity."

"H'm, h'm!" cried the lady sharply. "And this precious paragon of whom you speak—do you suppose I don't know, young lady, to whom you are referring?"

For an instant her listener's white face blazed to a sudden scarlet. Mrs. Rumbold swept on:

"Though I will own, when my daughter came in just now and told me of your early morning sail, and of your conduct when you landed—I will own that I hardly believed in the possibility of such imprudence. Jack Borridaile indeed!"

Before the veiled insult contained in Mrs. Rumbold's tones, the girl drew herself up with sudden dignity:

"And if I wish to preserve, so far as possible, Mr. Borridaile's good opinion of me, do you find that wish unwarrantable? Perhaps I owe him that much—certainly he has never failed"—for an instant

her voice halted in a self-revealing break—"certainly he has never failed in respect toward me!"

"Ah!" Mrs. Rumbold's little sharp eyes ran through and through the wan and quivering countenance before her. "Ah!" she said again, as bit by bit she pieced together the mute confession of the downcast eyes before her with all the varying circumstances of the past two weeks, culminating in the adventure of this morning. What a fool she had been not to have seen it before! Had she perhaps imperilled her beloved Letty's future establishment beyond repair? John Borridaile, in spite of his diplomatic correctness of standard, had been known at times to display a reckless disinterestedness, a dogged tenacity of purpose. And should this girl before her, in all her appealing loveliness, be allowed to go to him with her pity-compelling tale——

"Has John Borridaile asked you?"—Mrs. Rumbold put the question concisely—"or not, to be his wife?"

The young woman before her rose to her feet, a tall, slim figure in her white gown. Her face was brightly flushed, her eyes sparkled wide-open. "Mrs. Rumbold," she retorted with dignity, "I have done my best to serve you, I have promised to face disgrace and disaster in order to repair, as far as possible, the mischief that I have done you. But more than that you have no right to ask. I must refuse to answer your question!"

Mrs. Rumbold turned white with anger. "But I must know!" she cried shrilly. "I have a right to know! Mr. Borridaile, young lady, is practically engaged to my daughter Letty—the union of two great American families, of two magnificent fortunes—in all respects most suitable. Now that I have told you so much, will you have the goodness to tell me: has Mr. Borridaile been so foolish as to ask you to marry him?"

"How could he," retorted the girl quickly, "if he is engaged to your daughter?"

Mrs. Rumbold reflected desperately. Then a sudden quick thought gave her at once the ready answer to the girl's retort, and a weapon wherewith to make a final clutch after the establishment of her adored child.

"I said not that he *is*, but that he *was*, engaged to my daughter! Why have we changed our minds and broken it off? For reasons which even in your eyes may make him less desirable as a dupe and victim! Jack Borridaile is a fraud, my dear, nothing less—a worthless young adventurer, sponging on society and diplomacy, on the strength of his aunt's name. He never had but a few thousands of his own, and *that* went in dissipation and wild-cat investments years ago. And as for his expectations from his aunt—Mr. Rumbold has

it in confidence from his solicitor that the young man's disgraceful conduct has at last driven Mrs. Borridaile to alter her will and leave every penny to a second cousin of her husband's in Topeka, Kansas! My dear, John Borridaile is in debt up to his ears, he has borrowed from every Jew in town, he has forged his aunt's name, it is well known that he has accepted bribes for the use of his influence with the Secretary of State. His aunt has bought him off so often, she is beginning to be weary of the process. Any moment that she withdraws her countenance from him, crash! goes Mr. John Borridaile."

Mrs. Rumbold spoke rapidly, feverishly, her eloquence accumulating facts as it rolled on its onward course. "So much," she said, "for your great speculation, my dear! I hate to disappoint you or to betray what should be strictly confidential. But in your position I think it only right you should be warned that the game you are playing is not worth the candle!"

For one moment she stood regarding the girl at the window, whose large, melancholy eyes, bent on the watery floor beneath the terrace, seemed to follow with wistful glance the airy progress of a white-sailed boat that darted to and fro over the long blue rollers. After Mrs. Rumbold had ceased speaking her listener turned slowly, with a startled and enigmatical glance.

"It's very wicked of me," she said in a low voice, "to listen to your horrible stories about him—but, oh, Heaven forgive me! I *want* to listen to them! You mean to tell me that Mr. Borridaile is no better than I am myself—that he is making believe to be something which he is not, and intentionally deceiving the world all about him?"

"I mean to say just that!" retorted the lady. "Just like you, as you say, my dear—there's a pair of you, the Princess and the millionaire. I wonder would you care to have Mr. Rumbold show the proofs of what I have been telling you, or have you heard enough?"

"I have heard enough," repeated the girl slowly. "A pair of us—there's a pair of us!" Then glancing up suddenly, "Then tell me, Mrs. Rumbold," she cried, "what is to keep us apart?"

In the reaction of a sudden fear, Mrs. Rumbold stared at her opponent. Had the game been too keen, her weapon too subtle? Had the stroke from which she expected so much recoiled upon her from her enemy's hand?

"Tell me," said the girl again, while her triumph rose and throbbed in her accents, "if Mr. Borridaile is no better than I, how should I wrong him by accepting the offer which he makes me? If he is no more diplomat and millionaire than I am Grand Duchess of all the Russias, if he stands on the brink of a ruin as fearful as

mine, if discovery is a calamity to be dreaded no less by him than by me—then how should I wrong him by accepting him as my husband?"

For an instant Mrs. Rumbold's fertile brain reeled in a stupefied perplexity before this threatening fuse kindled by the spark of her own over-active wit. Then with a supreme effort she hurled her ready reply.

"Why is Mr. Borridaile's situation no better than your own, when he has cause as good to dread discovery as your own? I'll tell you why—because *he is not discovered!* In your fortnight's experience of the world you may have heard the maxim, 'It's not the sin, it's the getting found out, that is fatal!' and Jack Borridaile is not going to get found out! His aunt, you may be sure, would sacrifice every penny of her fortune rather than allow the great name of Borridaile to be smirched by a revelation of Mr. Jack's escapades. He has family friends, professional friends, who would move heaven and earth to save him. No, John Borridaile is not going to be found out; he's not going to be paraded in the police-court, in the evening papers, his name made the byword at every boarding-house table from here to California—he's not been fool enough to leave his precious secret at the mercy of that treacherous ruffian Debrezzin!"

Limply the girl's slight form drooped against the casement by which she stood. "Please don't," she urged faintly; "I own I was wrong and you're right, you are very right."

Mrs. Rumbold, with keen eyes shining wide with a returning triumph, picked up the little telephone-receiver that tinkled lightly at her elbow. "Mr. Rumbold with news from New York, I suppose," she observed eagerly. "I gave orders I should be disturbed only for something very important."

The girl at the window turned her tortured, unseeing eyes away from the little family conversation to which she was thus made unwilling witness. Suddenly her darkened consciousness was pierced by the syllables of a word which, like Dante's inscription over the gates of Hell, served as key-note to the whole abandonment of her sorrow.

"The chief of police—yes!" Mrs. Rumbold's high, clear tones repeated the word with a curious hesitation. "Yes, this is Mrs. Rumbold. Hello! Put your mouth closer to the transmitter, please. Yes, the Grand Duchess is still here!"

The girl turned quickly—Mrs. Rumbold's eyes, suddenly haggard like those of a woman of seventy, were raised to hers. The same thought, the same realization, flashed from each to each.

By mere force of habit, the girl's swift glance travelled to the clock. An hour—but there was still an hour left! Yet here, antici-

pating the vulgar, hideous fate which to-night would claim her, were those grim hands of the law stretching themselves relentlessly toward her. Debreczin had promised her till noon; in robbing her of this last hour, it seemed to her that he had inflicted a blow more wantonly cruel than the prime fact of the betrayal itself.

"Hello!" Mrs. Rumbold's little, pointed face, stiffened to the intensity of listening, was mottled in a curiously grayish pallor. "Yes . . . I am listening. Oh, I understand." For one instant her strangled breath escaped in a sigh of relief. "You wish to warn me to take special precautions in guarding my guest, the Russian Duchess? Oh, yes, certainly. Thank you so very much. The Anarchists are up to mischief again, you say?"

Terror for her own immediate safety smitten from her mind only to give place to vague, unformulated fears, the girl stepped forward. Mrs. Rumbold, however, had already regained something like composure, as she continued the conversation.

"Yes, I'll repeat your words if you wish it—you say there was a bomb-throwing right here in Newport only an hour ago? Yes, certainly I heard the explosion . . . Dynamite? . . . I thought it was a yacht coming to anchor in the bay! . . . The wretch himself was killed by the concussion, you say? . . . Yes, I understand you . . . The celebrated American Anarchist, Harrow—yes, *Morrow*, you say—just out of doing time in Auburn for the same offense . . . yes."

Dead! Elmer Morrow was dead! Even in the midst of her own distress, the girl was conscious of a regretful, yearning pang that filled her eyes with tears. And in swift, pitying vision her fancy flew back to the interview of two nights ago in the garden below—to Elmer's white, wistful face, his glance of dumb, pathetic passion, his voice as he had said, "If I could just do something for you, dear, to make you happy as I can't, and die doing it." And now poor Elmer—death was already his, without even the sorry comfort that he had asked.

Mrs. Rumbold's sharp voice continued: "On the steps of the Yacht Club—yes, I understand. But tell me, did the wretch do any damage to any one but himself? Good Heavens! speak out, man! It was n't any of *my* family, I know that! Hello! . . . Yes, you say his Highness was just stepping out of his automobile—"

Through her listener's mind flamed swift thought and swifter memory. The ruthless determination of Elmer's poor fanatical soul, the baleful glance with which, last night, he had silently recognized in the enemy of the mythical Grand Duchess the malicious and deadly foe of the girl whom, with all that was good in his unhappy soul, he so undoubtedly loved. "If I could just do something for you, dear, and die doing it."

Had he done it?

Mrs. Rumbold's sharp notes, rising to hysteria, repeated her last question. "Hello! . . . Who's on the line? Hello, this is Police Headquarters again? Yes . . . Hello! Tell me, did this wretch succeed in injuring the Prince?"

Another instant's pause, tense, terrible. Then the glittering instrument fell from Mrs. Rumbold's hand with a dull thud upon the counterpane. She wet her lips once or twice carefully with her tongue and swallowed with painful slowness.

"Prince Debreczin is dead," she said.

XVI.

JACK BORRIDAILE'S knockabout was making long, dreary tacks up and down beneath the cliffs, from Ochre Point to Bailey's and back again. Just what there was to call him to shore again, he failed to see. To be sure, the commission was to hold an informal meeting at twelve o'clock, but the presence of the secretary was not necessary. And unless absolutely required to do so, by irresistible duty, why bring this new and bleeding wound within the range of inquisitive human eyes and wearisome human tongues?

His work of which he had been so proud and so fond—in the emptiness of life as it now presented itself to him, where was the power of work to fill his days or his heart? And yesterday, in the desperation born of his mysterious loss and looming disgrace, he had assured his guardian powers that the lost letter, once restored, would be all he would ever ask of them! Very well, the letter had been recovered, verified, and even now was in the hands of the august personage for whom, and for whom alone, it was designed. His career was safe, his honor placed beyond doubt or question—and here he was, the most miserable failure in the way of a man that the Atlantic Ocean bore to-day on her long heaving rollers.

He was not good enough to be the husband of the woman he loved. There was the plain, unvarnished truth that stared him in the face.

In spite of the strongly-balanced nature which put all desperate measures out of the question, the long, white-crested waves that rolled from the bow of his craft looked to him strangely peaceful and alluring. But even in the bewildered extremity of his pain his chief thought was not for himself, but for her. "Poor little thing," he said to himself sadly; "it's rough on her, too. Poor little thing, she cried when we said good-by!" And even the secret pang of delight that lay hidden at the core of his suffering, to know that through all the darkness of their inevitable separation her love would follow him—even this solitary ray of joy was turned to bitterness in

his generous heart. No, even for love of him, he would not, with his own good-will, let a dark day enter into her life!

His boat, lying down to the fresh sea-wind, drew her swift course beneath the high-walled terrace and gray towers of Stormcliff. With self-denying resolution, Jack turned his head away. What was the use of gazing, like the silly fox in the fable, after those beautiful grapes that hung so high above his head? What he was suffering served him just right; he should have known better in the first place; he was rightly punished for his vanity and his audacity.

No, he would not look! Leaping from wave to wave, his boat was almost abreast of the breakwater whence Varvara had this morning emerged. Above him was the window—after all, just one look——

His heart leaped painfully, and through his body was a curious sensation, as though the blood had quivered in his veins. In the dinghy near him, propelled by a sailor with *Lotus* in large gold letters across his breast, was a fluttering white figure which stood up and waved to him.

"Wait a moment!" shouted Jack. Starting to his feet, he cast off his neatly-coiled main halyards, so that the white sail came down with a run, thundering in the wind and dipping its white folds into the sea. Then Jack pushed his tiller hard down and hove his boat to, under her bit of jib. On the long green wash of the rollers she rocked, held between wind and tide; while her skipper, leaning out over the gunwale, seized the dinghy with his boat-hook and drew her with cautious skill to the side of his dancing craft.

"Just a moment, Mr. Borridaile, please!" cried the voice which in all the world he loved best to hear. "Will you help me aboard, please? Just one moment—the man will wait. There . . . thanks, here I am quite safely."

They stood face to face on the unsteady floor of the cockpit, while the sailor, dropping to a discreet distance, waited obediently for his passenger's return. "Varvara," cried Jack, "what is it? Tell me quickly!"

Her cheeks were still white, but her blue eyes shone dark and glittering against the dusky, wind-blown background of her hair. Never before, Jack thought, had he seen her look so lovely, so utterly desirable. "Jack!" she cried, and at that name his pulses leaped in a sudden triumph—a triumph swiftly subdued by the sudden sombreness of her tone and look.

"I have news for you," she said. "Prince Debreczin is dead."

Jack stared. "Dead?" he repeated stupidly. Before the great inviolable fact of death, darkening the summer morning, touching with its faint cold hand the warm life that thrilled in his youthful

veins—before that great primal fact of death, all thought of the significance and possible consequences of this particular death was smitten from his mind.

"Debreczin dead?"—his tongue dragged itself helplessly over the words. "But I ate breakfast with him this very morning."

"But since then," cried the girl swiftly—"you remember the shock of an explosion that we heard barely an hour ago?" Horror-smitten, stupefied, Jack nodded his assent. The girl's breathless voice swept on:

"That shock we heard—it was not a yacht's cannon; it was the explosion of the dynamite bomb from the hand of an Anarchist, on the steps of the Yacht Club above here; and Prince Debreczin—Prince Debreczin was blown to atoms."

She shuddered in the sudden sickness of purely physical revulsion. Jack, forgetful of his own dismay, took her cold hands in a gesture of reverential and comforting tenderness.

"I understand," he said in a low voice, "what you must suffer in finding yourself approached for the second time in your life by this unspeakable horror. To have your husband's assassination thus hideously recalled to you——"

To his amazement, his words of respectful sympathy were cut short by a shrill and hysterical peal of laughter—though when his dismayed glance met her eyes he found no laughter there; only tears, and perplexity, and the extreme of a desperate resolve.

"My husband?" she cried. "That is what I have come to tell you. I never had any husband! He was a sham, a make-believe, like my title, my sapphires, everything about me!"

Jack dropped her hands. His eyes as he looked into hers were the eyes with which one looks into the face of death.

"Oh, child!" was all he said.

She read in his face the meaning which she had conveyed to him. "No," she said weakly; "it's all very bad to know, but it's not quite—so bad as you think."

"You are not the Grand Duchess Varvara of Russia?" he asked sternly.

She shook her head wearily. At the sight of the suffering in her face, his gravity relaxed suddenly into pleading gentleness:

"But if you were going to tell me this story at all, why did you wait till now? What has happened since an hour ago?" At the word the remembrance came back to him, of the newly-learned and hideous disaster which this new revelation, more closely personal and more painful yet, had for the instant driven from his mind.

"The man who stood between us is dead," he said slowly, "Debreczin is dead, so now you come to me?"

She winced before the vague, unspoken meanings of his words; then, controlling herself to a silent response, she nodded in affirmation.

Upon his next question, the answer to which must settle all the love and faith that his life held, Jack's tongue hesitated and stumbled like that of a school-boy.

"Tell me the truth: what was Debrezczin to you?"

She lifted her blue eyes, dark with suffering, heavy with the clinging wetness of tears, to his face.

"Not that—believe me, Jack, not that—neither he nor any one else that has ever walked the earth! But the sin of which I am guilty, Debrezczin knew. He threatened me with shameful exposure; he drove me to serve him in wicked secret ways. Though when it came to the point, I could n't do it—even for Mrs. Rumbold's sake. I could n't. That letter that you lost—it was I that stole it, at his bidding. Though when the time came for me to give it to him, I could n't betray you, after all, even to save her; so I defied him, and sent it back to you."

Jack stared at her. "Wait a moment! Debrezczin a spy—Debrezczin a blackmailer? My dear girl—are you sure there's not some mistake?"

"There's no mistake," she answered gently. "It's not so very hard to deceive an honest man like you, you know. I did it; why shouldn't he?"

Jack was silent. These were deep waters into which the mystery of his love had drifted—the stolen letter, the weighty affairs of two great nations, his professional honor that had so nearly been wrecked beyond repair. Yet through the dark confusion of these appalling revelations there came to him, pure and clear as the very truth, the self-condemning voice of the woman he loved and the self-torturing candor of her eyes.

"I don't understand," he said with firmness; "but whatever harm was meditated, none was done. And of one thing I feel confident: though you may yield to an instant's weakness, never would you be guilty of any treachery toward me or any other human being. Debrezczin is dead, we will let his sin rest with him. But if he traded in his knowledge of your imposture, to drive you for his own evil purposes——"

The girl stretched out her hand. "He was wicked, he was cruel, his death means for me a deliverance from what would have been worse than death, I grant you all that. But, oh! if he was bad, I am worse still—a swindler, a humbug who has cheated you out of your honest love. But listen—I have come back to you, partly because I no longer have the fear of open disgrace hanging over me, partly

because I have heard something just now which makes me hope that you will have charity and understanding for my mistakes. For in the beginning, Jack, it was nothing more than a mistake, I swear to you! I never meant to be really bad, but I was very lonely and helpless; and when the temptation came to me——”

“I am listening!” said Jack steadily, but his brain whirled.

She leaned toward him breathlessly.

“You see,” she said, “I came to Mrs. Rumbold’s just at the moment when she was in despair. Her Grand Duchess had n’t come, and all her plans were ruined. I had had a hard winter, Jack—my first winter in the city! You see, Mrs. Rumbold herself had told me to come up from Maine to go on the stage, and that she herself would look out for me. She painted such an alluring future for me, I sold my little house and boat that my father had left me, and came flying after her to New York. But she had forgotten all about me, Jack! My letters were sent downstairs again, Mrs. Rumbold turned her head away from me when I waited on her sidewalk. Oh, how lonely the streets were, Jack! And all the crowds that stared at me, so that I had to wear a veil—and the theatre managers, who laughed at me and tried to take my hand, when I came back to their offices for the twentieth time, to see if they had n’t a chance for me at last. My money was spent so soon—then I was sick—then I went and tried to be a housemaid, just to keep from starvation . . . But the master of the house was horrid! horrid!” She shivered and Jack’s fists clenched themselves. “And the lady said I was too good-looking for a servant . . . and I did n’t know what to do, so I came back to Mrs. Rumbold. I thought, if I could speak to her face to face, perhaps she would remember . . . You see, the family I lived with had brought me to a place near here for the summer . . . so when I had to leave, I just walked over here. I saw you, Jack, that day that I waited at the park gate. You made that dreadful man be quiet when he spoke so rudely to me . . . and, oh! but I was grateful to you!”

“Ah . . . Debreczin . . . the little reporter!” cried Jack, dimly groping in his memory. “But she was such a huddled, stooped little thing—and she had yellow hair under her brown veil, I remember.”

The girl before him smiled rather bitterly. “When one has n’t eaten anything for two days, one is apt to huddle!” she answered briefly, while Jack surveyed her in bewildered and heart-smitten compassion. Then as she touched her flying strands of red-black hair, “And as for the hair,” she said, “it does n’t take very long to change yellow hair to black—nor, thank Heaven, does it take very long to change it back to yellow again!”

Jack laughed helplessly. "I'm so glad," he said. "I love yellow hair."

"So you see," she went on swiftly, "when all of a sudden I was brought in out of the dark, into that splendid, glittering palace . . . and Mr. Rumbold came in with his wife, in all her perplexity . . . and all of a sudden he shouted out with his idea—what could I do? It looked so delicious, so entrancing, what they proposed to me to do—an adventure in fairy-land, a glimpse of the heaven I had read about! Then the wild rush on the yacht to New York that night—the dash through the shops—and the study and the training and the practice—oh, I was mad with excitement, I was tipsy with delight! That what I was doing was wrong never entered my head until that first night when you looked across the table at me—you remember, dear—and your eyes—your eyes, Jack, ran through and through me! Then after dinner"—her voice dropped to its sombre depths—"after dinner, Debreczin came to me and told me he had recognized my cheat. In return for my services in stealing your new treaty for him, he offered me his silence. How that ended, I have already told you. If I did n't realize at the beginning that the game I have played was nothing more nor less than a colossal sin, believe me, I realize it now. Debreczin is dead—I am hardly better than dead, in the knowledge that you despise me."

He looked at her keenly. "Despise you? So you think I despise you?"

She laughed bitterly. "A swindler and a humbug! A poor little girl from the coast of Maine, who happened to have a French mother and a small gift for play-acting! A nobody, a nothing at all—a Duchess of Dreams, indeed!"

"To me," said Jack slowly, "you are all the world!"

For a moment she stared at him through the blue mists of tears that filled her eyes. Then,

"Oh, Jack, I dared hope as much!" she cried, her voice thrilling to the wind. "I dared hope I might find in you understanding and charity even for faults like mine. For Mrs. Rumbold, you see, hoping to turn me away from you—she has told me everything!"

She paused for breath. Jack, placed beyond the power of new perplexity by the various startling revelations of this enigmatical interview, merely stared at her as she swept on:

"She has told me everything—and there is the reason that I have had the courage to come back to you. For if you are nothing that you pretend to be, Jack, neither am I! If you are a humbug, so am I! There's a pair of us, dear! We've played the game together, now we'll repent in dust and ashes together—we'll meet disgrace together if we have to—but together, Jack, always together!"

She paused, flushed and kindling, and over her last amazing offer her blue eyes shone a benediction into the face beside her. Jack drew a long breath of perplexity.

"I don't know," he said dryly, "what my dear friend Mrs. Rumbold has been telling you about me. But at all events, dear, I should rather not see you quite so ready to believe stories so very much to my discredit. Of course——" he added hastily. But with a sharp exclamation of trouble, the girl beside him rose suddenly to her feet. Her face was curiously changed and stony, and her voice came with difficulty, as though she had been running.

"Oh, I see, I see!" she said wildly. "I've been a fool, I understand now. I was so glad to believe her when she said you were an adventurer and a swindler, Jack—I was so delighted to believe that you were pulled down to my own miserable level—that I never stopped to ask myself if it were likely that such an absurd story could be true. I beg your pardon a thousand times for so wronging you, believe me! I see I have made a dreadful mistake. Will you signal the man to come up with the dinghy, please?"

But Jack had seized her hands again in his strong clasp. "My dear, my dear," he cried, "do you think that I could have any blame for you because, instead of turning your back upon me when you heard evil stories about me, you came and offered yourself to me? Do you think that I have anything but pity for you and your deceit, as you call it—you poor little deserted child, alone in the big, heartless world? But never alone again, dear, never again!" He paused a moment, bending over her; and their eyes met, gray eyes and blue.

"You have n't told me yet," he said smiling—"what is your name, my Duchess of Dreams?"

"My name," she answered softly, "is Angélique Hooper. Not much of a name, after Princess Varvara, is it?"

"Angélique," he repeated slowly, "Angélique Borridaile . . . yes, that does n't sound too bad, that combination. Look, dear!" In the light of a sudden kindling purpose, his bronzed face flushed and his square jaw set itself into lines of strong determination. With one hand still holding hers, he pointed with the other at the low-lying point of land across the bay.

"The little steeple is there still," he said gravely, "and the little white church. Out of the loyalty of your heart, you refused an hour ago to come there with me. But now, my dear little Angélique, my best-beloved till the end of the world—now, now may I point the boat across the bay?"

The deep eyes, bright with a blissful yielding, were fixed on his. "You want me?" she said slowly. "With all my faults that you know of, with the possibility of a thousand faults of which you know

nothing, you still love me and trust me and ask me to be your wife?"

"I love you," he answered steadily. "I trust you as I trust nothing else on earth. Answer me—will you be my wife?"

She nodded slowly, while her trembling lips broke in a smile. With a short boyish laugh of utter happiness, Jack Borridaile sprang forward to his halyards.

"There's no time to lose!" he cried swiftly. "First the little white church, very quiet and discreet; then the train from Tiverton; then New York—thank Heaven, this is Saturday! So to-morrow you can wash the horrid black stuff from your beautiful hair, and send out for some new clothes, and send a man back with a check for your dear Vassily if you want him—and anything, anything else in the world that I can get for you, dear! Then on Monday I run back here for the final meeting of the commission and say good-by to my aunt, and—and to pay proper respect"—his face darkened—"to the memory of that poor wretch Debreczin, who, whatever his sins, has gone to pay for them now. Then on Tuesday, dearest!"

Her eyes, full of adoration, met his quick smile.

"On Tuesday, dearest, we go down to Hoboken together and take the steamer to Cherbourg. In Paris, you see, we can concoct a nice little story—more of our humbug, you see, darling!—to tell when we come home again. Perhaps we can find an impecunious marquise to own you as her ward—oh, there are lots of ways in which to fool our fellow mortals, my dear, and keep poor Mrs. Rumbold's secret from leaking out to a disrespectful world!"

"And that reminds me," cried the girl: "I mustn't be so selfish as to forget Mrs. Rumbold. I must send some word back to her."

"Be quick!" Jack eased off the sheet of his half-hoisted mainsail. "Here's a page of my note-book—here's a pencil!"

Hastily scrawling a few words, she returned the paper to him. "Read it!" she commanded as her tender eyes smiled into his face; and, with an answering smile, he read aloud:

To Mrs. Rumbold: His Majesty commands my immediate presence.

VARVARA.

"Will that do, your Majesty?" she whispered shyly. For answer he looked at her, and his triumph was in his eyes. "Dear!" he breathed softly.

A moment later the seaman of the dinghy, with the message to his mistress folded safely in his pocket, was pulling for the high-walled harbor. And the knockabout, with all sail set and sheets started, was flying over the waves toward the opposite shore.



A VISION OF COLD

BY RUPERT HUGHES

BENEATH a little Himalaya of sheets, coverlets, comforters, spreads, quilts, blankets, and what-not, here I lie as cozily as a fallen Titan buried under a mountain thrown by Jupiter. It is shrewd weather this morning—or so the dog-cold peak of my bluish nose tells me; and when my one exposed eye is thawed enough to open and peer out, I see that I left the window too wide last night, for the snow has sifted in, and lies whitening the floor, and the curtains are shivering and flying from the wind. My breath curls up from my one bare nostril as steam from a kettle. My scalp-lock on the pillow must surely be frozen off. Not for worlds, though, would I put out my hand to feel and make sure.

And now some one knocks with hard cold raps, and tells me that it is time to get up. Oh, you impertinent housemaids, you are used to rising betimes, and you may easily make bold to walk about the warm halls! But as for me—I have left my window open and the snow is blowing in!

From force of habit I have answered the knock with a request that the cold water be turned on in the tub. And, now that I think of it, I believe it is a hot-bath morning. I call in vain. There is no answer. I look out again and sniff the cold. Yes, I know it is a hot-bath morning. Why didn't these people put a bell where one could reach it without getting out of bed?

I turn over to escape the sight of that gaping window, and have much difficulty in negotiating the warm spots again. The room is so cold that it seems as if my very glance would freeze and hang like a

long icicle from my lower lid. The bedspread lies like a crumpled field of snow.

It reminds me of the amusing adventure of a fellow-student at my old preparatory academy. One white holiday he went out hunting, and while he was scouring the bleak meadows and the barren thickets his fellows took great pleasure in a joke they planned for him. But he stayed away too late for them to enjoy their reward. He had lost his path, had begged a snack of late supper at a farmhouse, had been told the way back, and had lost it in the dark again and again. As he stumbled doggedly home, his one consolation was the thought of his warm bed. He reached the dormitory at midnight. He climbed the stairs on wooden feet, he pushed blindly into his dark room, where no fire greeted him. He undressed as swiftly as fatigue allowed, dropping his clothes like autumn leaves upon the floor. His last strength oozed in a sigh of joy as he leaped into his bed. He plunged his shivering legs to the knees into a heap of snow his loving schoolmates had neatly spread between the sheets. He was too tired to yell. But he got up.

My own flesh creeps in sympathy. I should prefer to think of something warm.

But now my coverlet is the little mill-pond in the village of my early boyhood in Missouri, and I recall the January day when a band of religious fanatics—Campbellites, they were called—went to the pond for the rite of baptism. Wagonloads of men and women came there in cheap and thin “ascension robes.” They waited on the bank while their teeth chattered as they sang hymns in helpless staccato.

I remember the stupefaction of the six-year-oldster that I was, when I saw the preacher wade right in up to his waist. He had to break the ice before him with a staff. And there he stood, summoning the converts one by one. Mighty must have been the faith that led them to him. As they arrived, he would put one hand behind their backs and one at their throats and, shivering out his formula, souse them under. Some of them struggled, and all of them came up coughing and sputtering and dazed. Then they were led dripping to the wagons, and the drivers whipped up the horses for a close race between pneumonia and salvation. I thought then, as now, that it was the ungracefullest way of absorbing divine grace ever devised, and that a title deed to a mansion on the sunniest street in Paradise would be none too great a reward for such an initiation fee.

If I must think of winter scenes, let it be an endless chain of Montreal tobogganers, or one of the bob-sleds loaded with boys and girls, that used to scour the hills of my later boyhood in Iowa, and used now and then to collide with a lamp-post or the hind wheels or front legs of a passing team. A few bones used to crackle like icicles, but youth knitted them together speedily.

Now my bed is the frozen Mississippi. There goes my younger brother, a mere boy, very erect and proud in his long and shapely coat. He is "snapping the whip" with a group of hilarious school-fellows. They are giggling at the skating of a very fat girl just ahead of them. She bowls along like a huge medicine ball, and she is very funny to see.

Swish—crackle—bang—splash! The ice is giving way all around them.

Douse! they are over their heads in the river. They bump together. Then each for himself. The ice comes off in their hands as they try to mount, but at last they find firm ledges. My brother has one knee out and is scrambling to safety. He glances back and sees the fat girl sinking. Her expression is terribly ridiculous.

He drops back into the river. A few strokes bring him behind her. He put his hands under her arms and treads water, while she clutches at him in vain. He calls, too, to the youths who stand staring in amazement. At last they understand. They skate to shore and come back with long planks, which they thrust out. It is a mighty job getting that hysterical fat girl hoisted into safety. And when finally she is out of danger, my brother is so cold that he can hardly keep afloat till the rescuing hands reach out for him.

Fortunately, he is too strong to die of a chill, and too young for the grateful fat girl to marry.

The thought of the spacious Mississippi reminds me, too, of the days when the ice used to break up and go gliding down the swift current. The great hummocks struggled and jostled and bellowed like sullen buffaloes. One day two young men rowed up the stream to shoot wild ducks that had gathered there. Eventually, in the scramble of those ice-herds, their boat was twisted and overturned. The two young men sank. One never returned alive to the light of day. The other rose to the surface. He was nearly beheaded, like John the Baptist, by two grinding cakes of ice; but he succeeded at length in crawling out on a floe thick enough to uphold him. There he drifted, swirling in the eddies, threatened by bulks that rose at him like sharks. His screams for help were heard and a boat put out for him, but it was driven ashore by the muttering pack. The current was carrying him toward the bridge. Some one ran out with a long rope, and held it dangling. He watched it with mad eagerness.

A swirl of water swept him toward the sharp edge of the ice-breaker in front of one of the piers. His floe escaped it by a sickening slither.

And now the rope is before him. He makes ready, seizes it with mortal earnestness! The men above begin to lift him. He rises slowly, slowly, toward safety. And now—his hands are too numb to hold. They turn to wood. They slide along the rope like pulleys. Straight down he drops, the ice opens beneath him, closes above him.

On the bridge a woman faints with a little cry. It is a week before they find the body, miles down the river.

And here I lie whimpering at the thought of one quick plunge in a cold tub, knowing from long experience that the aftermath is reactive rapture and lyric glow. But if I could only think of something warm for a while, I might take courage. Poetry for instance. Shakespeare? But he was the man who said, "'T is a cold and biting night, Horatio," and "Poor Tom." And it was his Pericles who called himself "a man throng'd up with cold." Keats is better; he was very warm. Ugh! He was the man who wrote:

The owl for all his feathers was a-cold.

The hare limped trembling through the frozen grass.

There was one poet at least who could put heat enough into his verse: Dante, the dismal visitant of Hell's most fiery torments.

But here again, in that Italian Inferno the ultimate torment was the ice; for in the ninth circle Dante and Vergil walked carefully among the livid souls sunk to their chins in the frozen stream, "*l'ombre dolenti nella ghiaccia*." Their chattering teeth pounded "like the beaks of storks," and the tears squeezed from them by the cold froze their eyelids together. It was here that Dante found Ugolino's skull gnawing the skull of the ancient enemy who had starved him and his wailing children to death. Well may commentator Scartazzini call it, in his orotund Italian, "*la dolorosa e commoventissima storia della sua tragica morte*."

I can see Doré's ghoulish picture of those sprinkled, frigid skulls. Out of my sight, hell's broth!

But now I come from the underworld into the over-hell of a wintry storm. A blizzard harries the Atlantic coast, and we people in New York count ourselves ill used because the streets are canyons of snowy wind and the cars run slowly and one must wait for them overlong on uncomfortable corners. It is not easy to get to the offices, and women must postpone shopping; husbands reach home late and soppy, and children grow troublesome from staying indoors all day.

At night, at the unspeakable cold and lonely hour before the dawn, an isolated house takes fire. Two sisters live there, one a spinster, one a widow with two children. The mother, waking at the call of love, and rising in the cold to see that her babes are snugly tucked in, gropes sleepily through dense warm smoke. The door is red as the open maw of a furnace. She screams. Her sister in another room wakes and, leaping from her window into a great drift of snow, runs to a distant fire-alarm. She is barefooted, clad only in a thin night-gown. The mother, seizing a child in each arm, makes her way to the roof of a

little hall. From her window the blazes thrust at her like torches. The wind worries her one light robe as she clutches her children to her icy breast. Her sister waits at the alarm-box; she is palsied with cold, and her bare feet are freezing as she stands.

At last, through the swirl of the storm, she hears a clangor of bells, she sees the fire-engine plunging through the thick snow. The horses tug and agonize; they are more beautiful than the chariot steeds of the sun. A half-hour of agony, a few frost-bitten fingers, frozen feet and ears, and no lives are lost. And yet, the Lord knows it was cold enough!

But all that day and all that night and all the next day there were hundreds of sailors aloft, tugging at canvases like boards; in the teeth of a gale they must grip icy rigging that cut and slipped through their hands. And in spite of all they could do and endure, some of their boats were shouldered gradually ashore, where the boiling surf pounded them and their men to pieces. A wild and bitter death was theirs, like that of the skipper of the *Hesperus*, frozen to his wheel.

Of one crew, wrecked off Fire Island, two men were left alive. The life-savers saw them, but could not launch the boats, try as they would. Nor could the life-lines be shot so far against the wind. These two men must wait in the lurching crow's nest. Huge companies of billows, all slushy with a dust of ice, rose up and leapt at them, smote them with bullet-volleys of spray. Hour after hour the men clung, battered, soaked, and shaken by the sea, gnawed and blistered by the furious wind. The sleep of death began to come upon them, but they fought it off. They danced and beat themselves till they could do no more, then they pounded each other, smote each other in the face till the blood came from their cracked lips. The life-saving crew watched them in an agony of helplessness. Tough as they were and used to the horrors that flourish along the beaches, they wept like children at the torment of their fellow men. The day wore on; night came; the life-savers built a fire on the beach as an allurements of hope. They trusted that some change in the wind would let them launch a boat. But the long night drifted on. Icy wave followed icy wave through the gloom, each taking toll of these prisoners of storm. Still the two men beat the longing for death out of each other. Still their mighty strength resisted all the inquisitorial tortures of the sea. The dawn found them alive. Late in the day the wind veered, a boat was launched, the men were taken off, and in the little hovel on the beach they found a palace of comfort where they could suffer the pangs of frozen flesh and pneumonia in quiet. What suffering must that long reality have been when the brief thought of it is such pain!

And still I lie here afraid to stand up and strip to take my wonted exercise before the open window, and then tune my arteries to a halle-

lujah chorus with a moment's splash in a coolish tub. I'll play the craven no longer. In an access of fearlessness, I make bold to rise to one elbow—whew! but it's cold. Back I sink again. The thought of that tub is worse than the sudden memory of an incident in Anthony Fiala's Polar expedition. One of his men fell through the ice and was rescued with difficulty. It was necessary for him to change his clothes at once. And he did; stripped to the hide in that God-and-man-forsaken region. "Fortunately," says Fiala, "it was only twenty degrees below zero." Fortunately! Only! Ye gods!

Now what is that figure limping across my counterpane?—a manikin in colonial garb. My bed must be the camp at Valley Forge. On such a morn as this the lonely sentinel watches the huge snowball of the moon roll down the sky, and the hardly warmer sun come up. In the garish daylight he can see the bitter post where he has dragged his bare feet back and forth, through the black hours.

With a rush of self-pity he sees the red traces where his bleeding soles have left footprints of glory on the white. But little he recks of glory. He thinks of the night-long weariness and the marrow-chill of his bones. He has no overcoat and no gloves, and where his palms have touched the barrel of his flintlock the skin has stuck to the iron.

All night the wind has slashed him this way and that, as with a broadsword. But even when, in his weariness, he thinks of his rest, now that his tour of duty is almost done, there is no joy in the thought; for in the blast-shaken huts the other soldiers lie on the hard ground without blankets and even without straw. They have been trying to forget their inveterate hunger in sleeping and in dreaming perhaps of the victories they have not had and have no right to hope. Or in dreaming, rather, of the homes they have left, of the mother clattering over the great pot hanging in the fireplace and savory with an incense of hot soup. So theré our forefathers lie, blanketless, aching, on the stony ground, and there the tattered sentinel stands and blows upon his fingers, numbed and sodden with the cold.

Away with you, old Continentals, away from my bedside, for you make my heart bleed even as your poor feet.

No, come back, pitiful little handful of you, for your place is taken by a phantasmagory of stupendous tragedy. My bed is now the road from Moscow, and Napoleon's myriads agonize across it for the homes they never shall see again. Thousands of horses foundered with weariness, lie shivering in the drifts, but quaking more with the fear of wolves that throng to raven on their living flesh. And men too lie helpless beneath their fangs and their up-shot howls of triumph. Men who were not many months ago hugging their womenfolk good-by are now snow-smothered hulks that wolves devour.

Then there were fifty thousand unarmed workmen, women, and children, who struggled after the army and made great sport for the jackal Cossacks. These and such soldiers as were captured and not instantly cut down, the humorous Russians, maddened for revenge, would strip stark naked and march in columns of misery through the blizzards, or turn them over to the peasants for an Indian torture.

In the midst of all these huge sufferings, I can never forget the chance allusion I read somewhere once, of the old French marshal—Junot, I think it was—who tried to cheer his shivering men by the force of example. Every morning of that arctic retreat he came from his tent in his bare skin, set a mirror on the breech of a cannon, lathered his cheeks and chin, and shaved with majestic deliberation, as Adam might have shaved in Eden. An unimportant sort of thing to do, but a Spartan proof of a captain's mettle, and almost the only cheerful thing in all that colossal cataclysm.

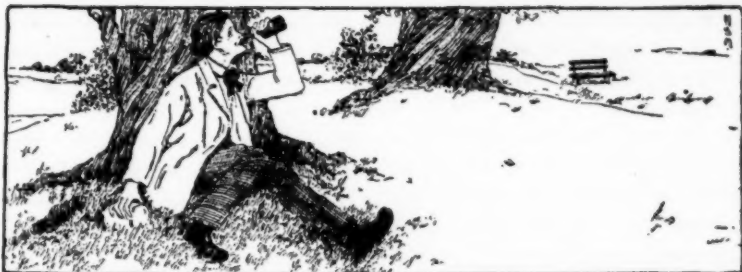
Here comes a little band, bursting out of a thicket into the open. It is Marshal Ney, "bravest of the brave," leading the rearguard into an overpowering swarm of Cossacks, infusing somehow new life into the dead hearts of his little band, changing exhaustion to frenzy, and forcing them to cut their way through the fiercest enemy, to make the last hours of life as terrible as possible, and to fight off to the last the merciful insistence of inevitable death.

And so the Grand Army that entered Russia four hundred thousand strong freezes and starves and crumbles till only twelve thousand reach the river Beresina. And there a few thousands of allies meet them, but the Russians have them all trapped beyond hope of escape. Still the soldiers fight, and the herded stragglers, driven into a cattle-panic, dash for the river. The bridge breaks. They plunge into the ice-choked stream. They drown in mobs, wrestling, groping, choking, screaming.

The battle ends at last. The Grand Army was. Napoleon, cowering in his sleigh, has fled. The battle-field is deserted; the river freezes over again; and all is peaceful till spring comes to unchain the stream. Then the dark waters disgorge their loot and cast it on the banks. The awe-struck peasants count twenty thousand dead—dead for an alien egotist, dead in the most causeless, the most hideous, war that ever raved upon this bitter earth. What are the Russian winds but the multitudinous wail of those human hecatombs?

Fall thicker, snows, and lie like ermine on those anguished veterans, dead to such little purpose in such awful pain.

And as for me, let me leap out with joy to the petty trials that confront us lucky souls, born out of Napoleon's reach, and in the golden summer of America at peace. It is morning and this is the Land of the Forenoon.



OMAR IN CENTRAL PARK

BY RICHARD LE GALLIENNE

ONE May morning of the present year, as the iridescent mists were rolling away from the lawns and copses of Central Park, still sleepy with dew, a strange figure suddenly made its appearance at the Seventh Avenue entrance, and passed in to the fresh green silence. It was as yet quite early. The cars still had an all-night look about them, and only here and there a forlorn figure that had risen too early, or stayed up too late, stood out in spectral emphasis upon the empty echoing streets. Inside the Park a sprinkling of nocturnal visitors still dozed upon the benches, or lay stretched upon the grass, and here and there an early worm was reading a morning paper. The habitual early-morning horseman would once in a while canter by, or a negro pass to his work on an ancient bicycle.

There was as yet hardly any one sufficiently awake to mark the apparition of young Septimus Maugan as he glided, little more material than the morning mist, along the pathways of the Park; a figure scarcely less weird and enigmatical than the young man who carried the banner with the strange device in Longfellow's poem.

But Septimus Maugan carried no banner. Instead, under one arm he carried a five cent loaf, under the other a fifty cent bottle of California claret; and protruding from a side pocket was a bulky roll of paper; a book of—unpublished—verses.

Septimus was a tall, slim lad about nineteen, with good shoulders and a springy walk. He had a long, rather Hamlet-like face, fine eyes, dreamy and yet at the same time alert and humorous, and he had quite a quantity of long, Liszt-shaped hair. If you can imagine such an anomaly nowadays, he looked as though he might be a poetical college boy.

As he swung along, with his supple stride, he seemed to take a

quite original delight in the morning sky, and the morning air, as though they had happened in the world for the first time. Not a bird or a spray of blossom escaped his eager young eyes, and as he walked he threw up his chin and laughed, and murmured snatches of song to himself; and especially you might have caught the words "Free, free, free!"

Presently he came to a halt in a secluded corner of the Park, where on a knoll of lawn a particularly inviting tree offered passers-by its morning shadow. Accepting the invitation, Septimus seated himself comfortably with his back against its trunk, and looked out with entire satisfaction upon the glittering green about him.

"I have now," he said aloud, "all the comforts of Omar Khayyam's paradise, except one, and I have 'A Book of Verses Underneath the Bough'—a Book of Verses none the less dear to me, perhaps even none the less good, because they have been rejected by the publishers; and a 'Bough' none the less real and green for growing in Central Park. 'A jug of wine,' 'a loaf of bread,' all the better for not being imported," and as he spoke, he placed the bottle of California claret securely on the grass at one side of him, and the five cent loaf on the other.

"Yes," he continued; "nothing is lacking but 'Thou'! However," looking at his dollar watch which still remained to him, the only kind of watch we can never lose, "it is only half past six, a little early to expect her yet; also, perhaps, a little early for claret," he added presently, as he deftly pushed in the cork of the bottle with a strong finger; "but Omar's instructions are imperative—the red rose of dawn must be greeted with draughts of the red wine. 'Come fill the cup.' But alas! I have no cup—well, the dawn must be content with my drinking to her out of the bottle."

So Septimus lifted up his eyes and lips to the morning sky and drank to the risen day in the red wine of California. Then, with his pocket knife he sawed off a thick slice from his loaf of bread, and as it and the claret made somewhat sour acquaintance in his morning stomach, he murmured:

"'Would you forget a woman—drink red wine;
Would you remember her—then drink red wine.
Is your heart breaking just to see her face?
Gaze deep within this mirror of—red wine.'"

Septimus had, the afternoon before, abruptly decided upon a change in his way of life. He was the son of a well-to-do dry-goods man, and for three years had been a clerk in his father's counting-house, supposedly "learning the business." But Septimus's mother had been a little French woman with romantic eyes, and it is to be feared that

to her account must be laid the fact of Septimus being that saddest of all family disappointments—a poet.

To the bewilderment of his father, and others engaged in it, Septimus didn't take to the dry-goods business. Why a promising young man should prefer literature to the dry-goods business, and books of poems to books of account, I do not pretend to explain. But the phenomenon occasionally happened, and it had happened in the case of Septimus Maugan. His relatives shook their heads over such unheard of tastes, and that mysterious entirety, "the firm," of which his father was only one, though the chief member, could n't make young Mr. Septimus out at all. It was not merely his incorrigible idleness, and his absorption in other tasks than those allotted to him, that the firm occasionally murmured at,—it had even yesterday made a formal protest against his personal appearance; his Liszt-shaped hair, his soft, silk necktie, his romantic hat; the firm had mildly requested him to try and look a little more like a young dry-goods man! Septimus had taken the affront as a compliment, declared that he would die first, and flung out of his father's counting-house never to return. For him in future, eat or starve, life should be the life poetic, the life for which he was born. After all, the needs of the poetic life were few. Had not the great Persian tabulated them in a formula so simple that the poorest poet could apply it:

"A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A jug of wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou
Beside me, singing in the wilderness—
O, wilderness were Paradise enow!"

So Septimus, half seriously, half humorously, had decided to celebrate his first day of freedom by an up-to-date application of Omar's famous quotation. As for the days to follow, had he not a book of unpublished verses under his arm, wherewith to buy his simple necessities, the loaf of bread and the jug of wine? The "Bough" was given free by the City authorities—but "Thou"—ah, where was "Thou"?

Pending the arrival of "Thou," Septimus unrolled his manuscript, and read his own poems half-aloud with much feeling and intense pleasure, only turning aside from them now and again to drink red wine, and munch his loaf of bread in obedience to the Master's command. This reading of his poems gave him not only æsthetic and personal satisfaction, it also gave him a profound sense of security in a world which, however inclement to other poets, could not, he felt certain, allow the poet of such verses to starve.

As he read, as poets will, he half forgot his surroundings, keeping

only the sense of the fresh green and the morning sky, oblivious of the occasional passer-by who eyed curiously the odd young figure under the tree, murmuring musically to himself. But presently, he was aroused from his reverie by a tiny figure with bright eyes, a great brush-like tail, and quaintly beseeching paws. It was a Park squirrel, foraging for peanuts. Septimus looked up.

"An omen," he said, laughing whimsically to himself. "Like Orpheus, I attract the very animals with the sound of my voice. If I am not careful I shall have these rocks and trees coming a-begging for my autograph.

"Little creature," he continued, "you are my first disciple,—I haven't a peanut in the world. Omar quite forgot to mention peanuts."

At that moment a bare-foot urchin passed by, intent on any entertaining mischief that might come his way, and Septimus hailed him.

"Go and buy me five cents' worth of peanuts," he said, giving him the necessary nickel. "And if you come back with them in safety, I will give you ten cents."

The urchin disappeared in a flash, and it seemed scarcely more than a flash ere he returned. Meanwhile, the squirrel got what fun he could out of a crust of bread; and on the arrival of the peanuts, he and Septimus became fast friends for the day.

The Park was now beginning to wake up to its daily business as a public park. The benches began to fill, and the passers-by became more frequent. A park-keeper, or an occasional park policeman blossomed here and there on the asphalt walks; and presently began the beautiful morning procession of smart young type-writers, and "sales-ladies," like a morning stream of morning glories, swiftly, and yet in maiden meditation, on their way to meet—nine o'clock. Septimus lost interest in his manuscript as this tide of enchantment set in, and he watched it in silence, watched it for "Thou"—only occasionally murmuring to himself a line from one of his unpublished poems: "The girls that never can be mine."

"The girls that never can be mine!
In every lane and street
I hear a voice that sounds like Thine,
The patter of small feet.
Straightway I follow fleet—
O love, alas! they are not thine.
They are not half so sweet.
And, even worse, they are not mine!"

"Thou" was evidently not an early riser; and, as Septimus thought it over, and watched that pretty tide of morning glories, he was glad that she was not.

Soon those flowers, commonly called babies, began to dot the lawn, and run up and down the green slopes, watched by the proud wistful eyes of young mothers. Septimus, too, watched them with hardly less affectionate attention. He liked looking at them even more than at the beautiful "sales-ladies." And his eyes were not lost either upon the mothers or the babies. There is nothing in the world so vain as a girl baby of three years old, no such consummate flirt. You have but to look at her for her to put on all the airs of a finished coquette. Such a young Eve had for some time been running up and down the green bank on which our Central Park Omar was seated, and each time she ran up or down she looked through the corner of her eye roguishly to see if her feat had been appreciated by the big gentleman sitting under the tree, who was so evidently in love with her.

Septimus, observing her wiles, pretended to be indifferent, and soon a little blonde, blue-eyed creature, hardly bigger than his squirrel, was touching his arm, and looking up into his face with all the confidence of her divine innocence; a little voice said:

"Are you the weather man?"

And, as she said this, Septimus's heart smote him, for he was absolutely out of candy.

However, that young urchin who had been the peanut messenger, having by this time consumed his ten cents in such dissipations as were to be bought for the money, was at the moment hovering near, with an eye to further business. Septimus hailed him.

"Run as fast as you can, and bring a half a pound of candy, and I will give you fifteen cents when you get back."

Once more the urchin was gone in a flash, and in a flash returned; and Septimus and the three year old Eve were fast friends till a smiling appreciative young Irish woman felt it was time to end the flirtation by wheeling a much candified young lady home in a mail cart, from which cries and sobs of farewell resounded for some distance through the green boughs.

After Baby Eve had gone, Septimus felt lonely for a little while, but soon a sadder and a wiser group of three, two women and a man, arrested his attention. They belonged to that nondescript class for which there seems to be no other word than "respectable." They were not working people, and yet they were. One might say they belonged to the upper-lower middle-class, the class that gives us our foremen and forewomen, and an occasional chauffeur. They made a somewhat uncomfortable group, but not a really sad one. They were too middle class to be sad. The man had evidently been drinking over night, and his wife and mother had with the best intentions brought him out into the morning Park,—to hear the birds.

The mother was a dear old lady with almost entire innocence of

the situation. The wife was pretty, but a little peaked—with sitting up waiting, one might surmise, for the Omar Khayyam footfall on the stairs. The man, a good-looking fellow enough, except for a certain common conceit in himself, which is a mark of his class, sat silent and morose, vouchsafing scarcely a grunt to the somewhat over-acted delight of his companions in the vernal prospect that surrounded them. For some reason, he seemed to have lost interest in birds, and when asked for the name of that tree, he seemed entirely disinclined to give it.

Presently the mother's voice floated up to Septimus under his tree. "Don't you think a nice cup of strong tea would be good for you, John?"

John seemed to take as little interest in a nice strong cup of tea as he did in the flowers and trees of Central Park. His wife gently shook her head at her mother-in-law. That was not the way.

Presently the mother, who seemed to be one of those lovable, innocent persons entirely without that guile which is tact, essayed again.

"Perhaps, John," she said, turning to a fruiterer's paper-bag at her side, "perhaps you would like a peach?"

This seemed really too much for John. At least it aroused him, and he looked at his mother with a sad, stern look, as much as to say that the eating of peaches was a weakness, even a vice, for which he had no sympathy whatsoever.

Humbly in the wrong, the mother subsided, and silence once more fell upon the group, till presently John turned to his wife. "Give me some money," he said.

She looked at him straight and cold and yet pitiful, and gave him half a dollar. The mother had not noticed this proceeding. Her pure old heart was occupied with this rare holiday of hers in Central Park. "It is an ill wind——"

So when John with strange suddenness recovered from his inertia and sped toward the Seventh Avenue entrance to the Park, the mother asked in all ignorance: "Where is John going?" and the wife answered: "He has gone to send a telegram. He will be back in a moment."

And John returned presently in a much more genial mood, and seating himself, took a flask from his pocket and drank.

And the mother, once more diplomatic, said: "You seem better now, John, but do you think that that whiskey is good for you? Don't you think it would do you good to have a little walk? I know how it is. You have been working too hard. You need a change. What do you say, Mary? Suppose we go and see the animals! They might cheer you up a little."

As John was by this time in a more accommodating mood, the

proposition seemed less fantastic than it would have seemed a few minutes before. Even now it did not seem to exactly fascinate him. However, as a concession to the two sad women who loved him, John went—to see the animals.

Septimus had watched the little drama with all the sinister intelligence of youth. As it moved away drearily to see the animals, he said to himself, moralizing thus: "Poor fellow! you give me distastefully, and, of course, quite unnecessarily, the symbol of the false Omarian, the man who has taken Omar Khayyam's name in vain, and misunderstood and misapplied his many-sided philosophy. You, 'poor John,' who must now, for your sins, wearily gaze at what your dear mother calls 'the animals,' you have, apparently, only assimilated one fourth of that quotation which is the Master's philosophy—you have remembered the 'jug of wine' and forgotten the rest. Like so many followers of Omar, you forgot the 'Loaf of Bread,' forgot the 'Book of Verses,' and more than forgot, nay, insult and despitefully use, the faithful 'Thou' at your elbow, who would die for your sake."

Now as Septimus eloquently pronounced the word "Thou," soliloquizing dramatically as his manner was, an old man who had been observing him for some time with a sad, amused expression—a shabby, distinguished, white-haired old man, with that unmistakable face which we call "the map of Ireland"—rose from his bench and advanced towards him up the slope. Septimus smiled him an invitation, and as the old man arrived "beneath the Bough" he made a courtly gesture to Septimus, after the manner of his wonderful race, and speaking in perfect Irish, said: "Young sir, I would not disturb your studies, but I confess to a curiosity as to the subject of them."

"I," answered Septimus, with a smile in which the jug of wine was beginning to predominate over the loaf of bread, "I am a disciple of Omar Khayyam, and to-day is his birthday."

"Omar—what?" asked the Irishman.

"Saint Omar, don't you know?"

"Do you mean where the priests come from?" asked the old man, who like all his countrymen was a devout Catholic, with a far away cousin at St. Omer.

"The very same," answered Septimus.

"And 't is him you are celebrating?"

"It is indeed."

"Ah, he was a great Irishman!"

"Won't you drink to him, too?"

"On your life, I will——"

And so old Tim Mulligan, who had been, he explained, the champion middleweight of his day, though now grown old and fallen upon

evil days, set the bottle of California claret to his lips and drank. He put it down with a wry face.

"Did the Saint drink this?" he said.

"He did," answered Septimus.

"Communion wine, I suppose," said the ex-prize-fighter.

"I guess so," answered Septimus. "You see, 'Rye' was n't invented in those days."

"Too bad," said the old man sadly.

"But happily it is now," Septimus continued, slipping something very like his last dollar bill into the old man's hand.

Old Tim Mulligan, who had for some time been desirous of celebrating the glorious return of day in his own manner, but had so far pondered in vain on the wherewithal, now took a ceremonious farewell of Septimus, with many prophecies as to the illustrious future in store for him, when old Tim Mulligan should be no more.

Now the time has come to explain that our little Septimus was by no means a practised Omarian. A few bottles of beer would probably represent the tavern room of his young life. He was also accustomed to a great boyish breakfast, and it was now nearing noon. Therefore his unaccustomed poetical fare began suddenly to tell on him in a way with which the world at large is familiar, but with which he now became acquainted for the first time. Was it the "Loaf of Bread" or the "Jug of Wine" that accounted for this strange dreaming inertia, this jocular paralysis of his members, these fantastic whims of a body that so far had been so athletically under his control, and for a certain vociferous elation which impelled him to saw the air, and recite his Master in a voice that was anon explosive as a volcano, and anon as gentle as the dying breeze?

While Septimus was wondering what was the matter with him, and yet feeling strangely contented and even saucy all the time, a burly blue-coated figure turned the corner of the shrubbery and gazed with considerable interest at the young philosopher. The form took further observations, and then valiantly advanced up the slope. He took Septimus for a Columbia boy, and so was wary. Now there are some patrolmen who like Columbia boys, and some who for some strange reason do not. Our Park policeman was one of the latter, and it must be added that either the "Loaf of Bread" or "Jug of Wine" had brought Septimus to that spiritual condition when nothing seems so amusing as the precarious diversion of "jollying" a member of the New York police. So as patrolman No. 163,257 approached up the slope, Septimus smiled banteringly upon him, and believing it the height of wit, said, "Can this be 'Thou'?"

The answer of 163,257 was brutally brief.

"You are under arrest," he said.

The rest is silence—till next morning in an adjacent police court, when Septimus as one of a number of fellow Omarians, stood before a cold and busy magistrate, all too accustomed to Omarians—under another name.

Asked the charge against the prisoner, patrolman 163,257 deposed that he had found him in Central Park, behaving in a very strange manner, with a half-eaten loaf of bread under one arm and an empty claret bottle under the other. Both these articles were in custody at the police station. Also a quantity of manuscript, which appeared to be poetry. When the prisoner was arrested, he made the extraordinary remark, "Can it be thou?"

"What is your profession?" asked the magistrate turning to Septimus.

"I am a poet."

"How do you account for your behavior yesterday in a public park?"

"I was celebrating the birthday of the poet Omar."

"Are you an Englishman?"

"No, your honor."

"Why then do you drop your aitches? You mean 'Homer.'"

"Pardon me, your honor, I mean Omar, Omar Khayyam of Naishapur."

"Never heard of him," grunted the magistrate; and then finished, as he turned to the next Omarian on the line: "I fine you five dollars. You look like a gentleman. Try in future to behave like one."

"I thank your worship," said Septimus, and withdrew.



RANDOM PHILOSOPHY

Hate is often unconscious fascination.

The ocean roars only where it is shallow.

Titania was not the last woman to love a donkey.

Reform is a plant that grows well in the sunlight of publicity.

If friends are regarded as assets only, we will soon spend them.

Red tape is the bandage that keeps a mummified institution together.

The gossip deserves credit for choosing some one more interesting than himself to talk about.

George Llewellyn Rees

THE FIRST INDORSEMENT

By Leila Burton Wells

COLONEL ALLEN sat in his office, his hand resting on a set of charges which had recently been laid on his desk. A great frown ploughed its way up to the white crest of his hair, and his eyes rested in sombre contemplation on the grassy slope that lay carpet-wise before his window, rolling down in straight, shaven splendor to meet a fringe of bamboo trees in the west.

Heartlessly cutting his window in two, a slender pole, straight and shapely as a bayonet, rose into the dense tropical sky, flaunting a star-spattered flag.

Colonel Allen had followed that flag from his boyhood, and his father and grandfather had followed it before him. His heart knew no music save the rattle of drums and the pipe of bugles. He was a soldier first, and everything else afterwards.

In his face all who ran might read the story of a blameless life, traced in indelible characters of fidelity and truth. There were no harsh lines anywhere, for time had wrinkled the yellow ivory of the skin softly; and from under the shaggy brows two keenly tolerant eyes looked out, guarded above by a dome-like brow, and below by a warning jaw. He held his head high, as befitted a man who had led men, and his smile was frequent and genial; yet one might pick him out from a thousand as a man whom sorrow had not ignored.

The case of the soldier whose charges Colonel Allen had been investigating had touched him unwontedly. Not that the man was innocent; for the witnesses had been examined with painstaking care, and there was scarcely the shadow of a doubt of his guilt. But the accused was young—so young that the honorless years that stretched before him seemed to the older man pitiful almost beyond conception.

The colonel was very lenient toward youth; for his own son, had he lived, would have been about the age of this boy. The memory of that young, dauntless life that he had hoped to lead into the high places touched him still with the pungency of a first sorrow. Nothing had seemed of much moment since he had lost his boy. The days had come and gone, and brought their meed of pleasure and honor; but ever a voice in his heart cried out for that other life, that should have carried into another generation the name he himself had held so stainless.

Unconsciously Colonel Allen crumpled the paper under his hand. Some parent had had high hopes for this boy, too, and by his own act the son had made them things of naught.

With a suppressed sigh, the colonel unfolded the crumpled sheets and read the charges through again.

In that Sergeant John Wilde, Troop "M," —th Cavalry, being in charge of Troop "M" Cavalry Mess, and as such having in charge the said Troop rations, did, in violation of the 62d Article of War, barter and sell certain portions of said rations, and fraudulently convert the proceeds to his own personal use.

This at Pasay Barracks, on or about the 25th day of June, 190—

The colonel slowly folded and creased the paper and placed a little bronze weight upon it. He drummed abstractedly on the desk with his fingers, his eyes again seeking the strip of green before his window.

As if it had been etched upon the sword, he saw the man's whole life history. His own unfavorable indorsement, the dishonorable discharge and subsequent imprisonment; and then—what?

He put his hand before his eyes as if to shut out the picture. He had seen it so often—the gradual slope downward of a life that had begun with fair promise.

He drew his brows together, and stretched out his hand to the bell. Well, as a man has sowed, so must he reap. Life is, after all, only a great battle-field, encumbered with the victor and the vanquished; and the one cannot stop to pluck the other out of the ditch. The coward or the wrongdoer has little chance in that great rush toward the goal of victory, for a false step at the beginning may tumble him into a bottomless pit, from which there is no emerging. Colonel Allen had no patience with a man smeared with the slime of dishonor; but he condemned none without a hearing.

When the orderly appeared in answer to his ring, the colonel directed him to have prisoner John Wilde brought in without delay; and, turning again to his desk, busied himself with his papers.

The band was playing at guard-mounting—some popular air with a plaintive melody running through it. Unconsciously the colonel tried to fit the words to the music, but they eluded him, though they were quite familiar. He stirred restlessly. The hot breeze brushed against the ylang-ylang tree in front of his office, and little breaths of perfume drifted past his window. From far off he could see the sapphire sky dipping into the solemn silver waters of the bay, and the ragged arms of the banana palms laced across the sunburned hills. Everything was instinct with vivid, palpitating life, but the scheme of color was laid on so recklessly that it irritated rather than soothed. Nature seemed to

have outdone herself in her efforts to conceal the manifestations of disease and death which lay hidden beneath her radiant garments.

The colonel felt a curious sense of impending evil. The band was marching nearer, and again came that haunting refrain. What were the words? He had heard Helen humming them only yesterday—something about a mother who had sacrificed her sons to her country. It was good to give one's sons up that way. It had not been permitted him even to know where his boy was laid, or how he had died. The news of his death had come, and nothing more. That was the colonel's cross, and it was a heavy one. All his hopes lay buried in that unknown grave.

Sighing, he brushed back the damp hair from his brow; and when the orderly reported: "Prisoner John Wilde, sir," he did not lift his head.

"Bring him in," he directed, reaching for his pen to put his signature to an order.

There was a moment's pause—afterward it seemed to the colonel that that blessed respite must have lasted a century; that respite in which he fingered his papers carelessly, without *knowing*.

Measured steps sounded along the hall, and the door was opened to admit the prisoner. The colonel opened a drawer to place an important paper therein, and then lifted his head . . .

There was silence in the great room—the silence that comes before death or disaster. Through the pulseless quiet, the adjutant's voice could be heard dictating a report, and the nervous click-click of a typewriter in the sergeant major's office.

After what seemed a lifetime, the colonel lifted his head and spoke—and, to his surprise, his voice sounded absolutely natural.

"Leave the prisoner with me," he said slowly, "and do not let me be disturbed. You can wait in the adjoining office"—to the sentinel. "I will ring when I want you."

He was silent while the door opened and closed; and then, as the prisoner took an impulsive step forward, he raised a peremptory hand.

"Wait!" he said commandingly, and walked swiftly toward the adjutant's office.

"Desmond," he said, addressing the officer seated at the desk, "I want you to go at once to the quartermaster, and speak to him about that road I pointed out to you last night. Get his answer, and bring it to me here."

He gripped the woodwork of the door with his trembling hand as the young officer arose and reached for his cap.

"Do you wish to sign these before I go, sir?" he asked, indicating some orders on the desk.

"No," the colonel said, forcing himself to speak calmly; "leave

them here, and I will attend to them later. There is nothing special, is there?"

"No, sir; nothing special."

The colonel waited in a sort of agony while the younger man gathered some papers together and stepped out into the hall; then he went back into his own room, closed and locked the doors between the two offices, and turned to look at the man who stood there.

The prisoner's face was turned away from the light, his hands were locked against his sides. He might have been hewn out of granite, so still he was; not a muscle of his superb frame even quivered. The colonel felt something tighten in his throat, and a strange sensation that he might have called fear, if he had ever known fear, overpowered him. He tried to speak twice before his voice came, and when it did it was frozen and threadlike. He stretched out his hands, that had somehow grown old and tremulous in a moment, to that immovable figure.

"Come here to the window," he whispered, "and let me look at you." All the command had gone from his voice; it was the wailing prayer of one who is afraid of a blow.

With an automaton-like movement the prisoner turned his face to the window, and the full laughing sunlight picked out every feature with nice distinctness.

The colonel looked, and looked, and looked again; and all the agony of the crucifixion was in his face. His eyes, which were the bravest eyes in the world, had the hunted stare of one who has been struck from behind, without realizing the extent of the hurt he has received. He had no words—nothing but that horrible, uncomprehending, terrified stare. Was this man before him really his own son? Bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh? Was this the boy that had issued from the sanctity of his home? *This?*

Suddenly, with a great and exceeding bitter cry, the prisoner tore himself away from those eyes, and fell crouching to the floor, hiding his face.

"Father!" he moaned. "Father——"

And the colonel, hearing, shivered as if a cold wind had blown over him, and stared dizzily around the room—at the huddled figure, at the rows of military books, at the sunlight; he even listened to the distant music of the band—

One was killed at Appomattox many miles away;
The other sleeps at Chickamauga——

He strode over and, stretching forth his hands, took the bowed head in them, and studied the face feature by feature.

No, there was no mistake. There were the same reckless eyes, the

same high cheek bones; the weak chin with the cleft in it, which he had tried to think would strengthen with age; the wavy bronze hair, so like—

The colonel suddenly dropped his hands and covered his face.

"It is true!" he whispered, shuddering. "*True!*" And then, with a mighty effort, as if the words were wrenched from him, he stared out at the heartless sky, crying aloud: "And their bullets spared me for—*this!*"

"Father——"

"Stand up, sir!" The colonel's voice rang out as if on a battlefield. At its tone an army would have moved. "Stand up and let me look at you—*my son!*"

The prisoner somehow got to his feet, and raised his head. His face was whiter than paper, and tears had blurred it.

So they stood staring into each other's eyes—father and son! Only a few feet separating them, yet as widely divided as if all the seas lay between.

At last the older man spoke, and his voice was devoid of emotion.

"Thank God," he said slowly, "that your mother is dead."

A spasm of pain twisted the prisoner's face, and the knuckles of his knotted hands showed white; but he made no answer.

"Why are you not dead, too?" went on his father dispassionately. "I want to understand—how is it that you are still alive—and can come to me like this?"

The prisoner was silent. He wet his dry lips, but no word came.

"How is it that you are still alive?"—again that inexorable voice.

This time the dry lips opened. "I let you think me dead, sir. It was the kindest thing. I never thought to look in your face again. I wanted to spare you disgrace——"

"You wanted to spare me——?"

"I hoped you would never know. It worked out so well. It was at Fort Meade, sir, that I got into trouble the first time. I got in with that crowd at Leed City, and—it was over a game of cards. They gave me a week to pull out, and they swore to expose me if I refused. You wondered why I was so anxious to take that trip to California. It was my only chance. I lived through hell in those days before I left. I was afraid to look in your face. Then came the accident on the Oakland ferry, and my opportunity. They printed my name in the list of dead, and I made no denial. I enlisted under an assumed name, and shipped on the first transport to the islands." The words caught in his throat. "I knew there was no good in me. I—I was afraid of myself——"

"Go on!"

"I wanted to keep the old name clean; and I was never fit for anything but the barracks—never from the first. I fell from the high

places to the low places; and the low places suited me. Oh, father, I was always afraid of—your goodness! It lay on me like a hand of iron. I would have died rather than have you know my low instincts. I thought it a fine thing to get out from under your influence, and go the pace; but I meant”—a quick flush rose to his brow and his eyes dropped—“I meant——”

“Go on!”

“I meant, sir, to be *honest*.” He lifted his head for a moment with defiant pride, and there was an almost terrifying glimpse of the likeness between the two men—the stainless soldier and the thief!

The colonel clutched the arms of his chair with his shaking hands. The veins stood out on his forehead like gnarled ropes.

“Then, this,” he said slowly, touching the paper on the desk—“this is true?”

The prisoner was silent.

“Is it true, sir?”

Again the question remained unanswered. There was no sound in the room, save the little whispering hiss of a quickly drawn breath. The colonel’s eyes no longer condemned; they were filled with a great, hopeless terror. He moved with the slow listlessness of a person who has recovered from a long illness.

His son, watching him, groaned aloud.

“I tried to go straight, sir,” he almost wailed. “God knows, when I let you think I was dead, and came over here far away from all who knew me, I meant to live a clean life; but there is something inside that drags me down! I can fight and die like your son, but—I can’t *live* that way!”

For the first time the colonel bowed his white head! It was for this, then, that he had worked and struggled and achieved. To have his very integrity turned against him! This thing with the prison looming big behind was his own son! This was the boy who had knelt at his mother’s knee, and lisped a baby prayer. This was the same gallant little figure he had set astride his big cavalry horse, and who had cried dauntlessly: “Let go the reins, father. I’m not afraid.”

No, he had never been afraid. He could shoot straight and ride straight, but he could not live straight. He, with his mother’s divine blood in his veins, could stoop to dishonor. The colonel lifted his haggard face to the strip of blue sky visible through his window, as if he would pierce the shadows of the unknown.

“Mary,” he whispered pathetically, unconsciously speaking aloud, “my only comfort is that you cannot see—that *you cannot see!*” His voice trembled, and with a sudden panting cry he held out his arms. “My boy!” he sobbed; and again: “My boy!”

The prisoner, stricken as with palsy, fell on his knees.

"I am not worthy," he stammered. "Nothing can ever make me worthy of your pain. Let me go out of your life again, and be as one dead. If I could have killed myself when I knew they would bring me before you, I would have done it gladly, but I was under guard. How could I imagine my trial would take place here? I knew you were in the islands, but how could I picture *this*?" A sudden convulsion contracted his face, and he stretched out pleading hands. "No one need ever know," he urged in a whisper. "If I do not come to trial, or if you could put a favorable indorsement——"

"What do you mean?"

The colonel lifted his head, and in his eyes the quick light of action sprang. He stretched out his hand with a protective gesture toward the charges.

"What do you mean?" he repeated.

His son's eyes fell.

"Only, that—you might—hush it up. It all lies in your hands."

"You would have me lie?"

The question burst like a thunderbolt in the quiet room.

"It would not be a lie, for you do not know——"

"You have told me that you are guilty!"

"It could be forgotten. You do not *know*!"

"God!"

The colonel lifted a ghastly face. For the first time, full realization came home to him. Those innocent bits of paper under his hand were pregnant with horror. It was his own son he must send before a tribunal which would be certain to condemn him. The charges but awaited his signature——

He steadied himself and tried to piece things together. There were ways of defeating justice—he had the power in his hands if he would but use it. No one would know. He repeated that tempting sentence over to himself, snatching greedily at the hope it offered. No one would know! Though in his heart he hugged a leprous secret, eating away by loathsome stages the white record of his life, the world would remain in ignorance. He would not live to be pointed out as the father of a thief! Great drops of agony broke out on his brow. It was not just that a man should condemn his own, and—ah, it was bitter at the end of a long life to face disgrace——

He had reached out his hand for his pen when suddenly out of the silence came a girl's voice. He started and put out a horrified hand. He had forgotten——

"Daddy!" called the voice. "Daddy!"

The prisoner went livid! His lips formed a name, but he could not utter it. He trembled where he stood. Then——

"Don't let her come in," he gasped.

The colonel rose to his feet.

"Dad!"

Those in the room were trying to compose themselves.

"Come to the window, dad. I've something to tell you."

Mechanically the colonel obeyed the girlish voice; and the prisoner from his corner saw dainty feminine hands reining a big horse over the grass. A face like sunshine was framed for a moment in the window, and two serene blue eyes touched with laughter looked into the colonel's grim visage. The prisoner heard a voice dainty and clear, with the music of home and peace in it, a voice that was strangely like his mother's—

He crouched down as if he had been struck with a lash. His sister—and she did not *know*! God keep her from ever knowing! He crushed his hands into his ears, that he might not hear—

"Hurry up with your old papers, then," the voice was saying. "I don't believe they are important—not as important as what I have waiting for you at home! My something has captain's shoulder straps, and wears yellow stripes, and is the dearest thing in the world—next to you! Do let the old office go, just this once. You promised to see him this morning, and he has come all the way from Manila." There was a pause, and a reply in the colonel's deep tones, inaudible to the other man. Then the girl gave a teasing laugh. "I'll wait just twenty minutes, then—not an instant longer. But why can't I come in?"—petulantly.

The prisoner shivered.

"Because—" The colonel's voice broke and then went on evenly—"because I am interviewing a prisoner."

"A prisoner? Oh, I'll go, then. But don't be hard on him, Dad. He may have a sweetheart somewhere."

"And a father," said the colonel slowly.

"A father, of course!" Her gay laugh rang out. "Not that that matters, for fathers are heartless things—fussing over orders and indorsements, and interviewing prisoners, and making themselves generally disagreeable, when they ought to be at home, listening— Now, don't frown—I am going this minute. Come along, Dandy. We have been dismissed. No, it is no use detaining me!"—touching her horse with a little imperious hand. "I refuse to stay where I am not wanted. If any one asks me where you are," she called back, with a little rebellious pout, "I shall tell them that you are doing your duty!" She threw a mischievous smile over her shoulder. "Is it horrid, dad, doing one's duty?" she demanded, flying off into the sunshine, and laughing as she flew.

"Is it horrid, doing one's duty?"—the colonel repeated the thoughtless question mechanically, as he turned to face the tragedy in the room.

He averted his eyes as something crept out of the corner and held out shaking hands. He dared not look.

"You heard her?" The words tumbled out through twisted lips. "Father, for her sake, be merciful!"

The young man's face was hideous with pain, and his great figure had no longer either shape or form; it was crumpled like a sapless leaf.

Without answering, the colonel stumbled over to his desk, and fumbled for his pen. His eyes were glazed so that he could hardly see. He knew that mess call was sounding, and that if he wrote he must write quickly. There must be no suspicion.

A butterfly, fluttering in through the wide window, brushed against his cheek. Startled, he raised his head—and there, blown out against the cloudless sky, stars and stripes burned to white silver in the sun, floated his country's flag!

It was the flag he had fought and bled for; the flag that he had hoped would wrap him in his grave, and guard him in his long sleep—and he was called upon to betray it! He whose life had been one long prayer of service; whose obedience to its call had been a by-word in the army! Something fluttered in his throat, and there was a noise as of cannon booming in his ears.

He looked and looked, and the sweat gathered on his brow.

He did not know how long he sat there fighting with himself; but he did know when, with an effort that seemed to shake the very centre of his being, he took up his pen and wrote.

The bugle was still sounding, and somebody was laughing outside, as he handed the paper to his son, and bowed his white head on his arms.

"First Indorsement.

"Respectfully forwarded to the Military Secretary, Department of Luzon.

"I have personally investigated this case——"

The room was going around as the prisoner picked out the words, struggling with them, fighting them. His father's hand had written them; his father's kind hand which had never denied him anything. Why was he afraid?

"I have personally investigated this case, and in my opinion these charges can be sustained."

The boyish lips faltered pathetically, and then, after an almost imperceptible pause, he went on bravely:

"Trial by general courts-martial is recommended.

"REYNOLDS G. ALLEN,

"Colonel Commanding."



HYPOCHONDRIA

BY GEORGE LINCOLN WALTON, M.D.

THE THIRD OF A SERIES OF FIVE POPULAR PAPERS ON WORRY AND ALLIED MENTAL STATES, WITH PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR SELF-CURE. THE PRECEDING PAPERS WERE "WORRY AND OBSESSION," IN THE NOVEMBER NUMBER, AND "THE DOUBTING FOLLY" IN THE DECEMBER NUMBER, OF LIPPINCOTT'S MAGAZINE.

Il marche, dort, mange et boit comme tous les autres; mais cela n'empêche pas qu'il ne soit fort malade.

MOLIÈRE (*Le malade imaginaire*).

THE hypochondriac is one who devotes undue attention to his own physical or mental condition, and who is unduly anxious regarding his health.

This state of mind does not, at first thought, seem a very serious trouble, but when the question of health occupies the entire attention of an individual, the condition is a most unhappy one, especially for his family and his friends. The tendency, even in mild form, narrows his field of usefulness and pleasure, and gradually sets him apart from his fellows. This is especially true since his fears are rarely strictly limited to matters of health. His anxiety to be perfectly well is generally accompanied by an anxiety to be perfectly comfortable and perfectly safe, an anxiety which itself paves the way to mental discomfort, and causes the over-cautious to appear a coward.

The hypochondriac may offer the picture of health, or may have some real ill regarding which he is unduly anxious.

Let us study the typical hypochondriac as he presents himself to the physician. The consultation is preceded by one or more letters explaining his exact condition, naming the previous consultants and

describing the various remedies he has taken. At the time of his visit voluminous notes are consulted, lest some detail be omitted. In his description anatomical terms abound; thus, he has pain in his lungs, heart, or kidney, not in his chest or back. Demonstration by the physician of the soundness of these organs is met by argument, at which the hypochondriac is generally adept.

The suggestion that he devotes undue attention to his own condition is met with indignant denial. Proposals that he should exercise, travel, engage in games, or otherwise occupy himself, fall on deaf ears, but he is always ready to try a new drug.

If a medicine is found with whose ingredients the patient is not already familiar, its use is likely to produce a beneficial effect for a few days, after which the old complaints return.



A certain lady is said to be so dominated by the fear of cancer that she rarely leaves her house, and then only for a drive upon unfrequented roads. After the departure of a visitor, I am told, the hangings are removed and the rugs shaken.

Another case which came to my attention is that of a young man who, for fear of taking cold, remains in bed, with the windows of the room tightly closed and a fire constantly burning. He has allowed his hair to grow until it reaches his waist, he is covered with several blankets, wears underclothes under his nightshirt, and refuses to extend his wrist from under the bedclothes.

There are men of robust health who can neither stir abroad nor be left alone, on account of overwhelming fear of impending ill.

Such faulty mental habits in minor degree are common. There are those who will not drink from a bottle without first inspecting its mouth for flakes of glass; some will not smoke a cigar which has been touched by another; some will not shake hands if it can possibly be avoided; another pads his clothing lest he injure himself in falling. Many decline to share the occupations and pleasures of others through fear of possible wet feet, drafts of air, exhaustion, or other calamity. Such tendencies, though falling short of hypochondria, pave the way for hypochondria, and, in any event, gradually narrow the sphere of usefulness and pleasure.

No part of the body is exempt from the fears of the hypochondriac, but he is especially prone to centre his attention upon the obscure and inaccessible organs.

An anecdote is told of a physician who had a patient of this type—a big, robust woman who was never without a long list of ailments. The last time she sent for the doctor, he lost patience with her. As

she was telling him how she was suffering from rheumatism, sore throat, nervous indigestion, heartburn, pains in the back of the head, and what not, he interrupted her. "Ah," he said in an admiring tone, "what splendid health you must have in order to be able to stand all these complaints!"

The so-called phobias are so closely allied to hypochondria that it will not be out of place to discuss them here.

A phobia is an insistent and engrossing fear, without adequate cause as judged by ordinary standards.

Familiar instances are fear of open places (agoraphobia), fear of closed places (claustrophobia), and fear of contamination (mysophobia).

The sufferer from agoraphobia cannot bring himself to cross alone an open field or square. The sufferer from claustrophobia will invent any excuse to avoid an elevator or the theatre.

A lady, when asked if she disliked to go to the theatre or church, answered, "Not at all, but of course I like to have one foot in the aisle; I suppose every one does that."

The victim of mysophobia will wash the hands after touching any object, and will, so far as possible, avoid touching objects which he thinks may possibly convey infection. Some use tissue paper to turn the door-knob, some extract coins from the pocketbook with pincers.

I have seen a lady in a car carefully open a piece of paper containing her fare, pour the money into the conductor's hand, carefully fold up the paper so that she should not touch the inside, and afterwards drop it from the tips of her fingers into a rubbish barrel.

The case of a nurse who was dominated by fear of infection has come to my attention. If her handkerchief touched the table it was discarded. She became very adept at moving objects about with her elbows, and was finally reduced to helplessness and had to be cared for by others.



Those dominated by the conviction that they cannot stand noises or other sources of discomfort rarely reach the point of a certain old lady who used to wander from clinic to clinic, able to think of nothing else than the ringing in her ears, and to attend to no other business than efforts for its relief. She was counselled again and again that since nothing was to be found in the ears she should endeavor to reconcile herself to the inevitable, and to turn her thoughts in other directions. Unfortunately, she had become peculiarly adept in the detection of disagreeable sights, sounds, and other sources of irritation, and had for a long term of years practised quite the opposite of control. She had hitherto either insisted on discontinuance of all sources of

irritation, fled their neighborhood, or put on blue glasses and stopped her ears with cotton. When, finally, her sharpened sense caught the sound of her own circulation, she could think of nothing but this unavoidable source of discomfort, which was prepared to follow her to the uttermost parts of the earth.

To the hypochondriac who concentrates his attention upon the digestive tract, this part of his body occupies the foreground of all his thoughts. He exaggerates its delicacy of structure and the serious consequences of disturbing it even by an attack of indigestion.

A patient to whom a certain fruit was suggested said he could not eat it. He was asked what the effect would be. He answered that he did not know, he had not eaten any for twenty years and did not dare to risk the experiment.

Extreme antipathies to various foods are fostered among this class. A lady told me recently that she perfectly abominated cereals, that she simply could not stand vegetables, that she could not bear anything in the shape of an apple, that she could not abide spinach, and that baked beans made her sick at the stomach.



The heart is perhaps the organ most often the object of solicitude on the part of the hypochondriac. When we realize that the pulse may vary in the healthy individual from 60 to over 100, according to circumstances, and that mere excitement may send it to the latter figure, we may appreciate the feeling of the hypochondriac who counts his pulse at frequent intervals and is alarmed if it varies from a given figure.

Inspection of the tongue is a common occupation of the hypochondriac, who is generally more familiar than his medical attendant with the anatomy of this organ.

Insistent desire regarding the temperature is common not only among hypochondriacs, but among others. I do not allude to the internal temperature (though I have been surprised to learn how many people carry a clinical thermometer and take their own temperature from time to time); I refer to the temperature of the room or of the outside air.

The wish to feel a certain degree of warmth is so overpowering in some cases that neither work nor play can be carried on until the thermometer registers a certain figure. A person with this tendency dares not step out to mail a letter without donning hat and overcoat, and the mere thought of a cold bath causes him to shudder.

Golf has cured many a victim of this obsession. It takes only a few games to teach the most delicately constituted that he can remain for hours in his shirt-sleeves on quite a cold day, and that the cold

shower (preferably preceded by a warm one) invigorates instead of depressing him.

Further experiment will convince him that he can wear thin underwear and low shoes all winter. Such experiences may encourage him to risk a cold plunge in the morning, followed by a brisk rub and a few simple exercises before dressing.

Morbid fears in themselves produce physical manifestations which add to the discomfort and alarm of the hypochondriac. I allude to the rush of blood to the head, the chill, the mental confusion, and the palpitation. It is true that one cannot at will materially alter his circulation, but he can do so gradually by habit of thought. To convince ourselves of this fact, we need only to remember to what a degree blushing becomes modified in any individual by a change of mental attitude. Similarly, the person who has practised mental and physical relaxation will find that the blood no longer rushes to his head upon hearing a criticism or remembering a possible source of worry.

The automatic processes of the body are in general performed best when the attention is directed elsewhere. After ordinary care is taken, too minute attention to the digestive apparatus, for example, may retard rather than aid it.

Watching the digestion too closely is like pulling up seeds to see if they are growing.



The over-solicitous individual who finds himself drifting into hypochondria should remind himself that it would be better to have an attack of indigestion or a fit of sickness than to become a permanent hypochondriac; that the indigestion and the sickness are by no means certain, but that the hypochondria is sure to come if these faulty mental tendencies are encouraged.

I have known a dressmaker in a fair way to abandon her occupation through aversion to touching a pair of scissors or other object that had been handled by another, or even to shaking hands. It sufficed in her case to suggest this line of thought, and to point out the inevitable narrowing of her sphere of usefulness and pleasure through the domination of this habit of mind. In a short time she was seeking opportunities to shake hands, and to handle after others the tools of her trade, in order to practise her new-found freedom from self-inflicted trammels.

Even with regard to more tangible fears, as of elevators, fires, tunnels, and the like, a certain tranquillity may be gradually attained by a similar philosophy. Suppose instead of dwelling on the possibility of frightful disaster the sufferer practises saying, "The worst that can happen to me is no worse than for me to let these fears gradually

lessen my sphere of operations till I finally shut myself up in my chamber and become a confirmed hypochondriac." The pursuance of this line of thought may result in the former coward seeking, instead of avoiding, opportunities to ride in elevators and tunnels, and even to occupy an inside seat at the theatre, just to try his new-found power, and to rejoice in doing as others do, instead of being set apart as a hopeless "crank."

The more attention is paid to the sensations, the more they demand. Nor can the degree of attention they deserve be measured by their own insistence.

Try the experiment of thinking intently of the end of your thumb, and imagining it is going to sleep; the chances are ten to one that in five minutes it will have all the sensations of going to sleep.



If this is true of the healthy-minded individual, how much more must it be so in the person who allows his thoughts to dwell with prolonged and anxious attention on such parts of his body as may be the immediate seat of his fears. The next step is for various sensations (boring, burning, prickling, stabbing, and the like) to appear spontaneously, and, if attention is paid them, rapidly to increase in intensity.

Medical instructors are continually consulted by students who fear that they have the diseases they are studying. The knowledge that pneumonia produces pain in a certain spot leads to a concentration of attention upon that region which in itself tends to produce pain. The mere knowledge of the location of the appendix transforms the most harmless sensations in that region into symptoms of serious menace. The sensible student learns to quiet these alarms, but the victim of "hypos" returns again and again for examination, and perhaps finally reaches the point of imparting, instead of obtaining, information, like the patient in a recent anecdote from the *Youth's Companion*:

It seems that a man who was constantly changing physicians at last called in a young doctor who was just beginning his practice.

"I lose my breath when I climb a hill or a steep flight of stairs," said the patient. "If I hurry, I often get a sharp pain in my side. Those are the symptoms of a serious heart trouble."

"Not necessarily, sir," began the physician, but he was interrupted.

"I beg your pardon!" said the patient irritably. "It is n't for a young physician like you to disagree with an old and experienced invalid like me, sir!"

It is probable that the mere pressure of part upon part of the body, and even the ordinary activity of its organs, would give rise to sensations if we watched for them.

The term "imaginary" is too loosely applied to the sensations of the hypochondriac. This designation is unjustified, and only irritates the sufferer, rouses his antagonism, and undermines his confidence in the judgment of his adviser. He knows that the sensations are there. To call them imaginary is like telling one who inspects an insect through a microscope that the claws do not look enormous; they *do* look enormous—through the microscope—but this does not make them so. The worrier must learn to realize that he is looking at his sensations, as he does at everything else, *through a microscope!*

If a person living near a waterfall ignores the sound, he soon ceases to notice it, but if he listens for it, it increases, and becomes finally unbearable. Common sense teaches him to concentrate his attention elsewhere; similarly, it demands that the victim of "hypos" disregard his various sensations and devote his attention to outside affairs, unless the sensations are accompanied by obvious physical signs.

Intead of running to the doctor, let him *do* something—ride horseback, play golf, anything requiring exercise out of doors. Let him devote his entire energy to the exercise, and thus substitute the healthy sensations of fatigue and hunger for the exaggerated pains and the anomalous sensations which are fostered by solicitous self-study.

Let him remember, moreover, that nature will stand an enormous amount of outside abuse, but resents being kept under close surveillance.

In practising the neglect of the sensations, one should not allow his mind to dwell on the possibility that he is overlooking something serious, but rather on the danger of his becoming "hipped," a prey to his own doubts and fears, and unable to accomplish anything in life beyond catering to his own morbid fancies.

The subject treated in the February number will be "Sleeplessness."

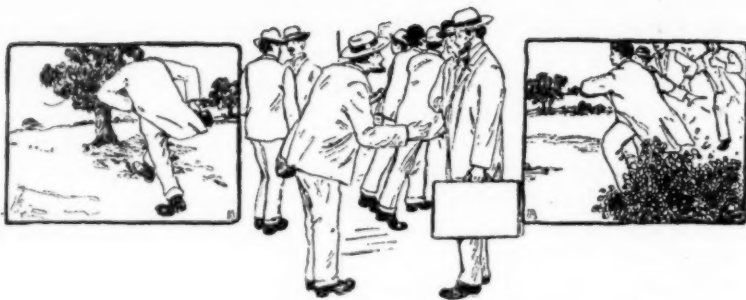


MASTERY

BY CHARLOTTE PORTER

SOMETIMES the Angel in me's down
 Struggling among men in the town;
 Sometimes, aloof, along the peak,
 Alone, it hears the Lord God speak.

Sometimes, it is so strong, I bear
 His word to me where all men fare:
 O best! if in the battling street
 Life's harshest voice to me rings sweet!



NURSING AN OIL DEAL

BY CHARLES U. BECKER

“YOU were speaking of fortunes in oil a while ago,” observed the blond-haired brakeman, entering the swaying caboose of cattle extra 916 and taking a seat beside me, as we pulled out of the yards at Topeka and headed for Kansas City. “Well, it was down in the oil-country—around Beaufort—that I cut my last wisdom tooth and came to realize just what kind of a swath fate mows through the plans of men.

“When I put an extra rubber-band around my thousand-dollar roll and lit out for the new oil-field, I fancied I was getting the early start that’d yield me the proverbial fat worm, but when I arrived I discovered about forty thousand men who’d started earlier.

“There was an alert-looking pack of real-estate agents lined up on the depot platform when I poked my head out of the car window. Yelling and jabbering, they closed in on the first passenger to alight, a dignified, portly chap, and rushed him back and forth until he suddenly vanished, leaving me in doubt as to his fate. Then they pounced upon the next one.

“To me it was a new kind of a reception, and I was busy taking observations and figuring what I’d do when it came my turn to step off when a red-faced, frenzied man saw me and claimed my undivided attention by charging. He stopped just before he collided with the car, and, fluttering a document under my nose, yelled frantically: ‘Sell five acres of Bean Lake! Sell five acres of Bean Lake!’

“‘What’s five acres of Bean Lake?’ I asked when he paused to catch his breath.

“‘Why, great snakes!’ he snorted. ‘Brother, I have saved you! Why, sir, it’s five acres in the very centre of what’s going to be the greatest oil-producing corner on earth that I’m offering you. Think

of it! Grab it, develop it, and you'll be able to light the world and bring a train-load of gold to your door. Sell five acres of Bean Lake!' he bellowed, and gave another exhibition flight into the murky, befuddling realm of adjectives.

"How much?" I ventured when he fell back.

"I'm ashamed to tell you," he whispered, after glancing furtively about. "Only ten thousand dollars per acre."

"Can that be possible!" I cried, feeling to make sure I still had my thousand.

"They're boring a hundred wells out there this minute," he continued rapidly, eyeing my pocket, "and they'd be boring a thousand if the railroad could bring rigs and piping here fast enough. One well is due to spout to-morrow, and when it comes in there'll be a stampede out of this town for the lake that'll live in history. Land values'll shoot heavenward till you'll have to make a balloon ascension to reach them."

"In view of those conservative statistics, your price is entirely too cheap."

"Don't I know it?" he fervently assured me. "It's the gospel I've been preaching up hill and down dale ever since my arrival. But I need a little development money. Take the five acres, and in a week you'll be a millionaire."

"Have you a family?"

"Wife and ten children—but what's that got to do with snapping up this gilt-edged bargain?"

"Everything. If you did n't have a family, I would n't hesitate about taking advantage of this splendid opportunity to enrich myself, but I have n't the heart to deprive your children of their daily bread. You keep the five acres until they make you a million, and then send the money to your children, with my compliments. I have n't a card with me, but my name's——"

"Great Scott!" he cried, backing away from me. "Say, you ain't looking for an oil-well. It's a sanitarium you want."

"If Beaufort had such an institution," I retorted, "you'd be a patient for treatment for running around trying to cheat your wife and children out of an inheritance."

"He did n't wait to hear any more, and I went up to the Jeff Davis Hotel, and got a bed for seventy-five cents. It was a cane-bottomed chair, all the other kinds having been preempted hours before my arrival. There being no more room around the wall of the hotel office, I took it outside under the twinkling stars and tilted it back against the building."

"Presently I noticed something sticking out of the pants pocket of the man on my right. As he was sound asleep, I leaned over to see what it was, and my heart skipped two or three beats, for it was a roll of

greenbacks—the biggest thing of the kind I'd ever seen! Naturally, I turned to see if the man on my left was awake. He was not, and I slapped my right cheek as though killing a mosquito—they being so plentiful that the destruction of an imaginary one would not attract attention—to determine whether I was just dreaming; for there was a huge roll bulging out of that man's pocket! Then, with little thrills chasing up and down my spine, I rose to reconnoitre, and, believe me truly, I counted sixteen rolls! There must have been more, because there were men sleeping out of reach of the light of the street lamp.

"And the sixteen men were snoring! I could n't see a policeman in either direction, and I sank back in bed to fight it out with myself. The idea of fleeing from Beaufort so soon did not appeal to me, for I had wandered two thousand miles to see an oil boom, and what I had observed convinced me that 'zee puffawmance vas not yait hawf ovah.'

"Well, after threshing the matter over carefully, I concluded there would be other nights, and that if I could n't find opportunity in the daytime I knew where she would be lurking in the limelight of a street lamp after the sun went down.

"Tilting my bed back against the wall, I courted sleep, but the utterly helpless condition of those rolls got on my nerves. After tossing restlessly about for quite a while, I rose and, taking my couch in one hand—because I'd noticed some men sitting on the sidewalk with their feet in the gutter, nodding—I went in to interview the proprietor of the Jeff Davis.

"'Don't you know,' I said, 'that you're in a fair way to ruin both the reputation of this hotel and the morals of the community?'

"'How so?' he inquired, with a lifting of the eyebrows.

"'Why, by letting men sleep in chairs on the sidewalk with rolls of money big enough to choke an elephant sticking from their pockets.'

"'We did n't use to allow it,' he laughed, 'but a man must tolerate a lot of things during an oil boom.'

"'Has n't Beaufort a safe bank?'

"'Best in the world. But say, you've just arrived, have n't you?'

"I said that I had come in on the evening train.

"'Well, then that explains your prejudice,' he said in a patronizing tone. 'You see, somebody's likely to be seized with a notion to sell something any minute of the night or day,' he condescended when I urged him to turn on more light, 'and lope down the street spreading the glad tidings. Checks, or running to the bank to get your money when you feel in a buying mood, don't go here, being entirely too cumbersome. In Beaufort you've got to be Johnny-at-the-rat-hole, with your wad between your left forefinger and thumb and ready to commence dealing when a bargain makes its appearance, or somebody'll reach over your shoulder and scoop it from under your nose.'

"I thanked him and retired, waking the next morning to find a line of men reaching from somewhere inside of the Jeff Davis to the sidewalk and down the street half a block. The uncut condition of their hair and the hang of their clothes told me they were natives.

"A man in line opposite me, observing me yawn and stretch my arms and legs to get rid of the cramps, said: 'Sell my place for six bits. Price inside is a dollar. I've got to run home and milk the cow.'

"'Price of what?' I bit eagerly.

"'Place in line to wash your face when you reach the tub.'

"'Get out! I'm no millionaire.'

"'Then,' replied he, appearing sorry for my helpless condition, 'fall in line and earn an honest dollar. You'll be sure to sell out before you reach the tub, and after the rush lets up a little you can run down to the river and clean up.'

"From the way the line was steadily advancing into the hotel, it was evident people inside were taking chances, and that there was good money in the occupation if the boom continued, but I figured it would take a scandalous lot of walking and waiting to make a million, so I turned that one down.

"When I returned from my bath in the river, business had opened in real-estate square, a vacant tract fenced off in the rear of the Jeff Davis, and it did n't take me two seconds to discover that all the land had changed hands so many times, lifting the price at each change, that my roll would n't buy a patch in the proved territory big enough for me to bore a well with a bridge auger. But I stood around listening to men handling ten, twenty-five, and fifty-thousand-dollar deals as if they were dimes, quarters, and halves, until I felt perfectly at home.

"It was during that tranquil period when I thought I had a hunch in the guise of an idea, and I pranced across the street to the office of Bingham and Jones, a firm owning or holding options on nine-tenths of the land in the proved territory. The place was alive with men, well-fed, prosperous-looking chaps, grouped about, conversing in whispers.

"Bingham sat at a roll-top desk, a stenographer at each elbow, tugging at his black mustache as he dictated letters and telegrams in tones reaching to the remotest corner of the office. I heard him send breezy messages to a dozen notoriously well-known millionaires about his rip-snorting bargains, advising them to rush their orders if they wanted to get in on the ground floor, before I stepped forth and said I desired to have a private talk with him.

"'This is my busy day,' he replied, studying the outlines of my figure over his shoulder. 'Please call later.'

"'It is a matter concerning your welfare,' I pressed, 'and I insist on doing my duty.'

"'Ah!' he ejaculated, and the stenographers, being well trained,

gave me a fleeting look and scattered to their machines without a sign from their chief. 'This way, please,' he added, leading me into the room where all the firm's heavy thinking was done.

"Having deserted our happy firesides and perhaps come thousands of miles, for all you know,' I protested, after closing the door, 'it is n't fair to us for you to tip off all the good things to stay-at-home millionaires.'

"When he began a lecture on his duty to old customers who took whatever he offered, having learned that he never recommended anything rotten at the core, I cut him short with 'What'll you take for an acre of ground in the proved territory, you to bore the well and produce a gusher before I fork over the price?'

"Why—why—you want to buy an acre with a flowing well?'

"That's the nub of my meaning.'

"It's a new idea. Lemme see,' he pleaded; and, pondering a few moments, added impressively: 'One hundred and forty thousand dollars.'

"Sold!' I snapped, with a flourish of my arms, startling him. 'When can you begin boring?'

"In—in the morning. You've bought the acre?'

"Certainly. Start the drill at once, and have the contract ready for signing in the morning.'

"I was for rushing away, but at his earnest request hung around the main office, where the fat boys were whispering, blowing to everybody who'd stand hitched about the well that I was buying, but saying nothing concerning the price. Before the morning was half gone Bingham had sold six half-acre tracts, wells guaranteed, at the price I was to pay for an acre.

"And I was thankful the next morning that I'd done him that favor, for when we came to make the contract he had the nerve to request the deposit of seventeen hundred and fifty dollars in the Beaufort bank to cover the cost of drilling.

"Back up there! Your foot's over the trace-chain,' I said frigidly. 'That's not the proper caper to cut when there's a procession of men waiting outside to sign contracts for wells. It might make them bashful about coming in here if they were to learn how much I'm getting for my money.'

"He saw my meaning, also the blow-holes in his position, and I side-stepped the deposit without any further debate.

"Those little routine matters being disposed of, I went out and encountered Anthony Rockwell, fresh from Wall Street, New York, a large suit-case in each hand, sweating and hurling frightful language at the evil genius which had led him to Beaufort. Being interested now in the good name of the town, his speech naturally shocked me, and I

stopped to uproot, if not too far advanced, the cancerous prejudice which was gnawing into his soul.

" 'I have enough money scattered about at home,' he confessed, his voice quavering, 'to buy this blooming, blasted, bloody burg, lock, stock, and barrel, and yet I can't find a bed. Why don't they stop this infernal clatter about oil and options long enough to bring in a train-load of beds? The savages ought to know that a man without a bed can't be in a decent trading humor. If I don't find one before the next train out, I'm going home.'

"While returning from my river bath the morning after my arrival I'd found a nice room in a large house at the edge of the town, and after Anthony had asked all the questions he could think of about beds, I told him of my find, offering to get an extra cot and share the room with him. He jumped my offer all spraddled out, and when he'd adjusted himself to my quarters later, he remembered to ask me what I was doing in Beaufort.

" 'Drilling wells,' I rejoined as nonchalantly as though that'd always been my business.

" 'For commerce?' he asked.

" 'No, sir, for my own individual use. I'm not going to let go of the one I'm drilling now, regardless of the tempting standing offer the Standard has made for it when it begins spouting.'

"He expressed a desire to see my well, and we drove out about sunrise the next morning. In order to give Anthony an idea how it'd cut up when it got the finishing touches, I slipped over to the completed Bateman well while he was watching the drill work and induced Steve O'Brien, the watchman, to let it spout two minutes. Steve tapped me at the rate of fifty dollars per minute, pleading in self-defense that the owner was somewhere in the territory, and that he'd lose his job if caught wasting oil.

"Anthony was so impressed with the outlook that, during our drive back to town, he asked what I'd take for my well.

" 'I've told you I would n't sell,' I laughed, 'but, just to satisfy my curiosity as to what your ideas of oil well values might be, and how they stack up alongside of the Standard's, what'll you give?'

" 'Oh,' he returned, 'I might pay two hundred thousand dollars.'

" 'Shucks! I can see you don't want a well. That's the Standard's offer for a well in half an acre.'

" 'Huh! Perhaps I'd give that, and five thousand more, for a half.'

" 'Pshaw!' I cried, but when in Anthony's presence the rest of the day—and because of the number of crooked real-estate agents in town, I did n't lose sight of him many minutes—my demeanor indicated that I was undergoing a fierce struggle with myself. I hardly noticed when he spoke, answering with grunts, nods, and monosyllables.

"As we were retiring that night I decided not to keep ourselves in suspense any longer, and I told him hesitatingly that I'd take his offer. He was pleased, and pointed out that I need n't feel so bad about the sacrifice, since I had enough land left for another well, which assurance restored my outward cheerfulness.

"When we drew up the contract Anthony insisted on tacking this clause to it: 'Provided land values are maintained.' The boom looked as though it was copper-lined and riveted at the seams, and, not being of a peevish nature, I let the proviso in.

"At this stage of the deal I began to feel my oats, and, in order to have room to think and to let my dignity expand, I hired an office and hung out the sign,

PHILIP PATTERSON

PROMOTER AND DEVELOPER OF OIL PROPERTIES

Gushers a Specialty

"But I had n't strained my mind thinking before I made the painful discovery that there were some things to do before I could hope for a place beside men who, planting their dollars one at a time and keeping them dry, had climbed slowly to fortune through years strewn with material that'd make good reading for future generations looking for pointers on the rocky road to wealth. Certainly I had a past, but I promptly locked its doors and boarded up its windows, and when not receiving calls from my client and reports from Bingham on the progress of the well, I wrote a new one of success after a dramatic but honest struggle with adversity, and prepared copies for distribution the day the newspaper men would swoop down upon me for an interview.

"I was planning a visit to my native village in a special train, with a band, hacks, flags, and a banquet with the wine served in steins, in order to get even with the old codgers who used to openly predict I'd never amount to a hill of beans and that I'd hang before I was thirty—yes, sir, I was smoking some—when Dan Tapley galloped into town and whispered to a few of us having our hearts and souls hitched to the oil business that his well was down twenty-six hundred and forty-three feet, that it was as dry as a shuck, and that he was going to pull up his drill unless something was done.

"We grasped his meaning instantly. Dry wells had been bored at respectable distances on three sides of the producing territory, and the Tapley well, being on the fourth side, would show investors that the Beaufort oil-field was a small pool, and put a crimp that would n't come out in the tail of the boom.

"We tried to look pleased in spite of the pain it gave us to have to ante up two hundred and fifty dollars a day to induce Dan to keep on

boring, but we soon discovered we'd subsidized a genius. One cloudy night he laid a small pipe from the tank which supplied the drill boiler with fuel oil to the pump which forced water down the well to wash out the drill cuttings. You never would have suspected its existence, for it was underground, and when a big crowd of investors would come out in the daytime to roost round the well till it came in, Dan'd open a secret valve while tinkering with the pump-gear, and presently there'd be a healthy flow of oil with the drill-washings. The moment he'd see it he'd dash at the crowd, yelling:

"'Back, men, back! For heaven's sake, fall back! She's going to spout!'

"Two or three squirts of oil would send the investors racing madly back to town, and they'd fall, panting and perspiring, into the arms of the waiting real-estate agents, and you can imagine what'd happen.

"Thus we managed to enliven six days of the week Bingham said it'd take to drill my well, and in the afternoon of the seventh Anthony rushed into my office with the rumor that it was manifesting signs of spouting.

"'Then you'd better get busy counting your money,' I suggested, and at that moment I heard a newsboy outside crying, 'Extra! All about the new oil discovery. Big accident!'

"It flashed across my mind, as I sprang to the open window, that the paper would n't get out an extra on my well, since it was nearly in the centre of the producing territory and its spouting a foregone conclusion.

"No, I saw the Tapley well had struck oil, which was an outrage, because we'd paid Dan a thousand dollars, and not one of us had thought of making him sign a contract letting us in on anything he might strike.

"Desiring all the disgusting details, I yelled for the boy to fetch a paper, and when he came, spread the sheet out on the desk so that Anthony could read with me.

"The oil discovery was in a town forty miles east of us!

"The accident? Oh, yes. It was merely the breaking of the bit of the Tapley well drill when it encountered a ledge of granite, and when Dan got through hauling the rod out to put on a new bit, the prying public found that the hole was three thousand feet deep, a little matter of fifteen hundred feet too deep to strike oil in that territory.

"'Of course,' I laughed, turning to Anthony, 'this will not interfere with our deal.'

"'Sure not,' he replied, with a smile, adding, 'not if land values are maintained. That's in the contract, you know.'

"Yes, I knew, and I also knew from the noise which'd started over in real-estate square since we'd obtained the paper that values had

already sagged several feet. I could n't recall when I'd ever heard such harrowing cries of distress.

"While I was using up valuable time trying to think, Anthony left the office, and the next instant Bingham fell in, screaming:

" 'It's in! It's in! The well! The well! Come over to the office at once, and we'll complete the transfer.'

" 'All right, the moment I count my money,' I rejoined, fishing up my thousand-dollar roll to see how much was left. There was eight hundred missing, but I refrained from conveying that information to Bingham, because he was so intensely excited I did n't think it'd interest him.

" 'Come over to my office and count it,' he urged. 'Plenty of room there.'

" 'No, thanks; it's a habit of mine, which I've never been able to break, of counting my money alone and sitting with it a few minutes before going out to pass it around.'

" 'Well,' he cautioned, 'don't lose any more precious time than absolutely necessary when you come to the sitting part, for my wife's telephoned for me to come home and hang some pictures.'

"He dashed for the door, and, after giving him time to reach his office, I collected my papers, raced out to my room, and found Anthony serenely packing his suit-case.

" 'Why, what does this mean?' I demanded impulsively.

" 'That I was born under a lucky star,' he returned, his chubby chops wrinkled with an exasperating grin. That grin was the straw that broke the back of the patient camel, and I proceeded to frizzle the foliage around him. As he got through packing before I finished my job, I insisted on escorting him to the depot, though he assured me he knew the way well enough to hazard going alone.

" 'Well, so long!' he shouted cheerily from the rear platform of the last sleeper as the train pulled out. 'Glad to've met you, and, honest, it pains me to see you ranting in the sun, for you're likely to be overcome by heat or burst a blood-vessel.'

"As I was looking over my unexpressed thoughts for a suitable retort, I caught sight of Bingham advancing through the crowd at a pace which told me he was looking for somebody, and I took a long walk in the country, returning after the stars had made their appearance.

"Learning over the 'phone that Bingham was safe in the arms of his family, I remembered how I'd spent my first night in Beaufort. Feeling too tired to trudge out to my room, I got one of the Jeff Davis open-air beds for ten cents, a depreciation of sixty-five cents, which gives you a fair base from which to reckon the immense distance oil-land values fell after that newspaper extra.

"There were men nodding on all sides of me, but they seemed to be

having bad dreams, muttering and crying out often as though in great mental agony, and I also made the distressing observation that something had happened to give rolls a mighty big scare, for there was n't a single one playing peek-a-boo with the stars.

"As a heavy dew was falling, and the mosquitoes very annoying, I gave my bed to a man trying to sleep leaning against the lamp-post, and went down to Phil Burke's, in the basement of the Jeff Davis, to drown my rage in a drink before sneaking home.

"The place was packed with men engaged in the same occupation, and I managed, after a herculean struggle, to rivet my hands to the brass bar-rail, got a high-ball after repeating my request until I was hoarse, planked down a crumpled dollar bill and received four seventy-five in change, a mixed costing the same as two straights captured together.

"That revived my interest in life, and I chased out and ran a corner on dollar bills, harvesting forty-two. Hurrying back, I ordered high-balls as fast as the overworked force could mix them, laying down a fresh bill each time. When I'd stowed away twenty of my favorite brand and earned eighty dollars, the crowd began to filter away to bed, and the bartender got time to look at my money long enough to give me correct change.

"The success of the deal in high-balls completely turned my head, and the next morning I was up with the lark, preparing for a career which looked good to me.

"Fortunately I'd brought a full beard to Beaufort, and when I cut off my mustache and peeled my chin, leaving what in some sections are called Rock Islands, but more generally known as mutton-chops, and put on a frock coat, a stained-glass-effect vest, and a high hat, and stepped over to the mirror, for a minute I thought I was looking out of the window at a man displaying a lot of nerve watching me make my toilet.

"Well, after I'd become so reconciled to my changed condition as to be able to look upon my reflection without losing my temper and longing for a basket of nervous eggs, I started for the depot, the landlady standing on the front porch, her arms akimbo, staring after me in a manner which convinced me I'd overlooked a bet by not leaving the room rent for my friend, Mr. Patterson, to settle.

"The train had just arrived, and as it was between me and the depot, the real-estate agents thought I'd come in on it when I crossed between a sleeper and a chair car and stepped jauntily to the platform. It was the same bunch that'd met the train the day I arrived in Beaufort, but any one could see at a glance that somebody'd left them holding the sack and that they were sick of their job. They blinked and stared a few seconds before appearing to realize that I was a stranger in

need of plucking, and then they closed in on me with a rush, evincing such eagerness to gain my attention and such jealousy of one another that I was forced to retain possession of my suit-cases in order to prevent bloodshed over who should have the honor of carrying them. We marched up to the Jeff Davis, where I registered as Colonel H. James Dalrymple, Chicago.

"'Gentlemen,' I said, as I turned from handing the pen to the smiling clerk, 'I've come to your hospitable city in search of a safe investment for capital.'

"At that moment Bingham excitedly elbowed his way through the crowd, demanding, 'Which way did he run?'

"'My dear sir, are you seeking some one?' I inquired.

"He fell back and gave me a searching look. 'Why—why,' he stammered, 'it was yours!'

"'Mine!' I cried, my heart pounding like an engine climbing a steep grade. 'What are you talking about?'

"'Bingham,' shouted a man out in the crowd, 'keep your troubles to yourself. The gentleman's looking for an investment.'

"'Oh, I beg your pardon,' Bingham apologized. 'Your voice misled me. Please proceed.'

"'That's all right, sir,' I replied, delighted over my escape. 'I prefer oil properties,' I added, turning to the crowd. 'I've very little money myself'—I felt sure they'd interpret this as capitalistic modesty—but a company of Chicago, St. Paul, and Milwaukee men, having confidence in my business judgment, asked me to run down and look over this field. After I've had breakfast I'll be pleased to begin inspecting.'

"The clerk informed me, when I returned to the office an hour later, that my friends were waiting outside, and when I threw open the door I was greeted with a chorus of 'Here's your automobile,' 'No, this is your hack,' and 'Colonel, your carriage is waiting here.' Men stood holding the doors open, shouting and gesticulating to attract my attention. I selected a big automobile for my morning ride, and nearly lost my life reaching it, for the owners of the other vehicles tried to head me off and pull me back.

"I led a strenuous life after that. When we'd return from inspecting one bonanza, I'd be yanked out of my carriage or automobile, rushed across the street or down an alley, and thrust into another vehicle, and with a hurrah we'd be off again. I believe I left the imprint of my number nine shoes in every square rod of ground within a twenty-mile radius of Beaufort.

"I never failed to ask embarrassing questions about the Tapley well when we'd whiz past it, and at first the agents were both bashful and crude at satisfying my curiosity or diverting my attention; but

under my tutorage they improved rapidly and were soon diplomats at saying nothing in answer to a leading question and could drape a lie with language that sounded exactly like the truth.

"The generous way I had of making favorable reports to my backers after each dash into the country shoved the silver thread in my popularity thermometer to the top of the tube. In the morning it was 'Good morning, colonel,' and 'How are you feeling this morning, colonel?' from every side, and I'd have to stop and shake hands with several thousand men and render as many reports on the state of my feelings. At night, when I'd start to retire, it was 'Good night, colonel,' 'Sleep tight, colonel,' 'Pleasant dreams, colonel,' and I'd have to repeat the hand-shaking act many times, and they would n't scatter, either, until I'd staggered up the grand stairway—there was no elevator in the Jeff Davis—to my room and closed the door.

"But one night I jumped out of bed to call a bell-hop to fetch me another pitcher of ice-water quick, and a man who'd been sleeping in a chair tilted against my door fell backwards into the room. After the excitement had subsided, I was able to observe that he was not the only one guarding my roost. In order to see whether I'd have any difficulty in leaving Beaufort when the critical moment arrived, I'd rise in the middle of the night after that and take a walk, but I'd never stroll more than a block before I'd meet some of my friends.

"My longing for the simple life was intensified after I'd slipped down to Burke's a number of times to realize on what remained of my dollar-bill corner, for every confounded time I dived into my jeans to pay for a high-ball I'd ordered all by its lonesome, somebody'd touch me gently on the shoulder and say, 'Why, colonel, we can't tolerate this! I insist on joining you and paying for the drinks.'

"Though I went through the motions often of digging up money to pay for little things, I never got a chance to spend a cent. I kept books on what the real estate men were out, however, and after the sum had passed the two-thousand-dollar mark, and they were waiting for my backers to authorize me to take sixty-five thousand acres of sure-thing oil-land off their hands, they gave a big banquet in my honor at the Jeff Davis.

"I poured most of my wine on the floor under the table while the agents were exchanging felicitations and boosting Beaufort as a safe place for the laboring classes to plant their honest dollars, and when I thought the rest of the company were thoroughly soaked, I rose with a smile, stepped around in front of the banquet-hall door, and in a neat, humorous speech revealed my identity.

"It was so quiet in the hall while I was working up to the lemon that I could hear the banqueters breathing asthmatically through mouths that'd dropped open. I laughed at the close of my revelation,

and my hilarity seemed to break the spell which'd settled over the erstwhile joyous feast. Their champagne appetite was changed into a fierce thirst for blood.

"Yes, sir, I got away—a man can go some with a mob yelping at his heels—but I lost my baggage, did n't have time to pay my hotel bill, and had to swim the deep, muddy river. With my stove-pipe hat and evening clothes, I must have created considerable of a sensation among the alligators, snakes, and frogs which inhabited the slimy swamp through which I waded five miles to get to another railroad.

"Though I failed to establish communication with Dame Fortune and get mine, I came to appreciate what a strain the President must be under at White House receptions, and on tours of the country, when the people press forward to grasp his hand. Before I ran away from the farm I used to read about self-made Presidents, and have trances from which I'd emerge about the time the Senate would pass a resolution questioning the motive of one of my many generous acts in behalf of the down-trodden people; but since my Beaufort experience I've withdrawn those immature visions from circulation, and I desire to enter an emphatic protest against ever being elected President."



THE HOUSE OF PAIN

BY FLORENCE EARLE COATES

UNTIL the Prison House of Pain none willingly repair,—
The bravest who an entrance gain
Reluctant linger there,—

For Pleasure, passing by that door, stays not to cheer the sight,
And Sympathy but muffles sound and banishes the light.

Yet in the Prison House of Pain things full of beauty blow,—

Like Christmas-roses, which attain
Perfection 'mid the snow,—

Love, entering, in his mild warmth the darkest shadows melt,
And often, where the hush is deep, the waft of wings is felt.

Ah, me! the Prison House of Pain!—what lessons there are bought!—

Lessons of a sublimer strain
Than any elsewhere taught,—
Amid its loneliness and gloom, grave meanings grow more clear,
For to no Earthly dwelling-place seems God so strangely near!

THE FORTUNES OF SPLINTER

By D. M. Henderson, Jr.

"I 'VE heard the sleep of the just is sweet and sound," Deuce commented, as Splinter, despite the vigorous shake he gave him, snored on, "but the slumber of this here unjust cuss had got it beat bad!"

"Sorry we had to spile yore nap," he puffed, when Splinter was at last aroused, "but we'd like the honor of yore company."

Notwithstanding his drowsiness, Splinter caught the meaning under Deuce's irony. He grew wide-awake in an instant. "You don't mean you want me fur killin' that Greaser?" he gasped.

The committee scratched its heads.

"Yo're goin' to hang an American citizen fur pluggin' a Greaser! Shade o' Sam Houston! Ain't you the patriotic lot!"

The committee, prepared only for physical resistance, quailed before this style of attack. Splinter renewed the assault. "Would n't he have done me if I had n't done him?"

Deuce essayed the committee's rescue. "What 's the use of goin' on that-a-way? If we let you off, ev'ry cut-throat in the State will invite hissell to High Hope. Be reasonable, Splinter!"

"I *am* reasonable," Splinter doggedly returned. "Killin' a Greaser ain't a hangin' offense, no way I look at it."

Gila now took up the argument. "It might n't be as much of a hangin' offense as some other things, but we ain't got no jail to stow you in, an' 'tween lettin' you go an' stringin' you up, we think the last is nearest to justice."

"That 's exactly it," Deuce approved, and the rest chorused assent. "You'd better git ready, Splinter," Deuce added.

Splinter, however, clutched at a straw. "So if you had a jail you would n't hang me! Well, I was a builder afore I took up prospectin'. Lemme build High Hope a jail an' serve a term in it. Then I'd get my just dues an' no more."

The dumfounded committee raised many objections when it recovered its speech, but Splinter answered them convincingly; he even went so far as to offer to defray the cost of building. The committee, however, still hesitated.

"I've said all I'm going to say," Splinter said resignedly. "If you gents don't want to give me a square deal, all right. If you don't want a jail that will advertise High Hope an' make the other camps jealous, all right. But when I'm swingin' from a limb I hope High Hope will learn how you had the chance to boost her sky-high an' turned it down!"

The committee could hold out no longer. "Yo're too public-spirited a cuss to hang!" Deuce averred, grasping Splinter's hand. His companions quickly followed his lead.

Now that the situation was in his hands, Splinter made the most of it. "How long a term do you gents think right?" he suddenly queried.

The committee scratched its heads.

"What's yore notion about it?" Deuce asked.

"Seen' as how it was only a Greaser, how does a year strike you?"

Deuce looked at his companions; they nodded affirmatively. "A year it is," he agreed.

On the next day the committee writhed under the jeers of High Hope, for Splinter had disappeared. But two days later he returned, serenely mounted upon a wagon containing lumber, hardware, and tools. Choosing a prominent site, he set to work diligently.

Some months later he proudly announced to expectant High Hope that the building was ready for inspection. Prepared to receive with due modesty its felicitations, he awaited the inspecting party.

"I've seed many a jail, but nary one with bay-winders an' peaked roof, an' nary one painted in sich rainbow colors," remarked Thirsty. "Looks like it's meant fur summer boarders 'stead o' convicts."

Splinter glared at him. "Durn yore opinion! Why, gents, I tried to make her *different*! That gay paint an' them bay-winders is what's goin' to make it known outside o' High Hope."

Splinter's defense was received approvingly by the inspecting party, so Thirsty shifted his ground. "It ain't got no cells!" he sneered. "Shucks! The one they had in my town had nothin' but cells." He grew reminiscent. "They had two long rows on each floor, with a hall between. My cell was on the second floor, an'——"

He paused, but too late. "Yore cell, huh?" snapped Splinter. "So you were one of the pris'ners? Well, I don't want no advice from a jail-bird!"

"Jail-bird yoreself!" was on the tip of his critic's tongue, but Splinter, in expectation of the retort to which he had left himself open, assumed such a belligerent attitude that Thirsty left it unsaid.

Suddenly realizing how near he had come to falling short of his duties as host, Splinter turned away. Luckily, the criticisms he now heard were all highly commendatory, and he soon recovered his spirits.

Indeed, under these influences he became so jovial and entertaining that High Hope, already glorying in her jail, began to congratulate herself upon her prisoner.

It was becoming a nightly custom in High Hope to pay Splinter a visit. One evening, when a group of representative High Hoppers gathered at the jail, Splinter attempted the removal of the one barrier between him and contentment.

"Look a' here," he ventured. "My cash is goin'. How is this jail to be vittled when I'm broke?"

An ominous silence greeted his query. "That's yore lookout, Splinter. We did n't bargain fur that," Deuce said cautiously.

"Other jails pay fur themselves," Thirsty suggested. "The convicts make shoes."

"The *resident* of this jail is willin' to do all he kin to make it self-supportin'," Splinter returned. "I'll try to find a way, if you gents leave it to me."

"Anythink you do suits us," Deuce answered, voicing the views of his relieved companions.

With this assurance, Splinter at once sought a means of support. Before another week elapsed he bought the stock of "The Bung-hole" from its retiring proprietor, and placed in front of the jail a sign:

GRAND OPENING

Backcuss's Bar!

SPLINTER JUBB, PROP.

The fust drink free evry night
to evry costumer!

As Splinter gazed admiringly at the signboard, Thirsty, on his way by, stopped to read. "Backcuss! Who's Backcuss?" he inquired.

Splinter regarded him witheringly. "If you had any book-larnin' you'd know Backcuss was the god o' wine!"

High Hope stopped before the sign, gaped, grinned, and entered to procure its first drink, which, as the crafty Splinter had foreseen, was many drinks removed from its last. The free drink inducement had been nothing short of an inspiration; even Thirsty, prone as he still was to praise his home jail at the expense of High Hope's, was silenced.

High Hope grew fond of Splinter; the business of the bar showed a steady increase; the jail became a popular resort. Splinter's imprisonment, as a consequence, was so much to his liking that he began to regret that he had not asked for a longer sentence. As his term drew to a close, his customers often found him absorbed in thought.

Now Thirsty, who had watched enviously Splinter's prosperity, at this time grew also deeply meditative. A few days before Splinter's term expired his thought bore fruit. When night came, strengthened

by many drinks of Splinter's strongest brand, he started on a rampage. After a brave attempt to shoot out the stars, he returned, whooping blood-curdlingly, to the jail. The crowd hurriedly made way for him.

"Where must I put my hat?" he inquired of Splinter.

Splinter surveyed the battered article in Thirsty's grasp scornfully. "Is it too valuable to wear?" he queried.

"I'm going to live here," Thirsty volunteered, "an' 'tain't perlite to wear a hat in the house!"

"Goin' to live here, are you?" Splinter asked.

"Yep. Yore time's up, and I'm the man fur the place! I arrest myself fur disorderly conduct!"

Splinter's glance rested for an instant on an open trap-door near where Thirsty was standing. He stepped forward. "Oh, if that's so, lemme take yore hat," he said cordially. When he got within striking distance his fist and foot shot out, and Thirsty crashed through the trap-door opening.

"Make yoreself at home," Splinter chuckled, as he closed and battened the door. "Sing out when you want feed, an' I'll pass you the bread and water."

In high glee at Thirsty's discomfiture, Splinter returned to the bar, but as he faced his amused customers his mood changed.

"Disorderly conduct," he sighed. "Ain't that a picayune thing alongside o' killin' a man?"

"See here, Splinter, no one looks on you as a murderer!" Deuce protested.

"'Course not!" the crowd seconded.

But Splinter sighed again. "It's kind of you all," he returned dolefully, "but a man's conshunce don't lie! There's blood on my hands."

"You've got a mighty slow-actin' conshunce," Gila remarked. "You did n't think yoreself a murderer when we was goin' to hang you."

"My conshunce don't tell me it's murder," Splinter explained, "but it does say my punishment was too light fur my crime. I was wonderin' if I could n't get another year put onto my term?"

Despite his reproachful glances, his suggestion evoked uproarious laughter. There was no opposition, however. "If it'll take that unnatural look off yore face, I'm willin'," Deuce assented. "What d'ye say, gents?"

"Shore he can!" the crowd returned heartily.

At this moment Gila thought of Thirsty and pitied him. "Can't you give Thirsty better quarters?" he pleaded.

Splinter hesitated; the proposal was far from his liking, yet he did not wish to appear in a bad light. An incident that occurred while he pondered saved him from further embarrassment, however. A bullet

from Thirsty's Colt passed through the floor and shattered the glass that Gila was about to drain. Gila made a wild leap after the stampeding crowd. "Don't mind what I said!" he bawled. "You've got the durned fool in the right place!"

Thirsty made an outcry when he heard Splinter closing the jail. "Lemme out, Splinter! If you've got a heart in you, lemme out!"

"You ain't tired o' the jail already?" Splinter replied.

"Lemme out, an' I hope I may die if I bother you ag'in!"

"Durn me if you ain't changeable!" Splinter soliloquized. "Well," he said finally, "if yo're so dead anxious, I guess I'll have to let you go. Pass up yore gun."

Thirsty scrambled up and made for the open when Splinter threw back the trap-door.

"Hold on! You've got some free drinks comin' to you," Splinter called after him. "Here, drink to my new year! My term's been stretched."

Thirsty glanced venomously at his adversary, then longingly at the bar. His desires conquered his hatred; he seized the proffered glass. Splinter did not stint him. After many drinks Thirsty's memory dimmed. "I was a fool to buck ag'in' you!" he gurgled.

The second year of Splinter's term was as prosperous as the first. At its close, more than ever desirous of remaining, he again began to plot a means to continue his occupancy. Before he had determined upon a course, however, his thoughts were diverted.

On the day before that on which his term expired, word reached him that Thirsty had sprained an ankle. Since Thirsty had begun no second movement to oust him, Splinter felt quite kindly towards him, and now, actuated by a sympathetic impulse, he carried to the unfortunate a flask containing his most excellent brand. He found Thirsty in a fever of impatience.

Splinter's kindness impelled Thirsty at last to make him his confidant. "Will you do me a favor, Splinter?" he asked.

"Shore! Say the word!" Splinter responded cordially.

Thirsty reddened. "I was to meet the stage to-day. A lady what's goin' to marry me is comin' on it. I wish you'd meet it fur me and steer her up here."

Splinter's cordiality vanished. "I ain't one you kin make a fool of!" he growled.

"I ain't tryin' to," Thirsty reassured him. "I'm in dead earnest. I writ an advertisement to a matrimony paper fur fun, an' she answered it. She writ sich a nice letter I took a longin' to see her, so I sent her money to come out. If we like each other on fust sight, we're goin' to send over to Gold Gulch fur the Sky Pilot to splice us."

Convinced of Thirsty's sincerity, Splinter excitedly strode off to meet the stage. Thirsty, meanwhile, shaved himself and made an elaborate toilet. Then, nervously expectant, he sat at the window. After a long wait he saw her of his dreams approaching, gallantly escorted by Splinter. Beside himself with excitement, he hobbled across the room for a last squint in his cracked mirror. After a desperate struggle with a refractory lock of hair, he limped back to the window. But instead of leading his sweetheart towards him, Splinter had turned with her into the road that led to the jail.

Thirsty rubbed his eyes, but his sight had not deceived him. As the lagging minutes passed without the pair's reappearance, his dreadful doubt became a conviction. He had been betrayed; Splinter had stolen his intended. He started after them, in a frenzy, but the pain from his ankle forced him to return. Hurling himself despairingly across his cot, he exhausted his vocabulary of oaths.

When night fell, his fellow-townsmen stopped on their way to the jail to inquire concerning his accident, and the indignation which the recital of his wrongs aroused comforted him greatly. When it was discovered that Splinter had even failed to send for the minister, the wrath of the party bubbled over.

"He's disgraced High Hope, an' there oughter be somethink done to him!" Gila exclaimed.

"Maria ain't to blame!" Thirsty wailed. "I'll bet she's still expectin' the Sky Pilot."

"Knowin' nothin' to the contrary about her," Deuce observed, "we'll take that view of it. It's up to us then to help Thirsty rescue her! What d'ye say, gents, to carryin' him to the jail?"

The suggestion was eagerly welcomed. Thirsty, borne on the shoulders of his supporters, now grew joyously anticipative. He was to win back his sweetheart and crush Splinters. And might not this tidal wave of sympathy land him in the place he had so long begrudged his enemy?

The party found the barroom closed, but a light shone from an adjoining room, and Deuce's thunderous knock brought Splinter in swift response. The party, expecting to meet Splinter's companion, entered quietly; the woman, however, was not in the room.

"What kin I do fur you, gents?" Splinter inquired blandly.

"How kin you meet honest men without tremblin'?" Thirsty burst forth.

Splinter coolly stared at him. "What's up? I don't tumble," he returned.

"Ain't you robbed me of a wife? Ain't you scandalized High Hope? Ain't you brought to this publick institushun a woman you ain't marrit to?"

"No!" Splinter thundered; "I ain't!"

Thirsty fell into the arms of his friends and gasped.

"D'ye mean to tell us you did n't steal Thirsty's gal? D'ye mean to say she ain't here now?" Deuce queried.

In answer, Splinter pointed to a paper tacked on one of the walls. "Read that!" he said scornfully.

Moved by curiosity, Deuce obeyed. "Let's hear it!" his companions cried. He read aloud:

THIS CERTIFIES

That on the 7th day of July, in the year 1893, Horatio Jubb and Maria Boone were by me united in Holy Matrimony at Coyote Corners, Mo., in accordance with the laws of the State of Missouri.

EZEKIEL BURROWS, Minister.

"Who's Horatio Jubb?" demanded Thirsty.

"That's me—when I ain't Splinter," the accused replied.

"An' the lady you met is yore wife, that was Maria Boone?"

"She's got the fambly Bible to back it up," returned Splinter. "I'd git her to bring it down if her head was n't achin' from her trip. We had a misunderstandin' back East, an' I left her, but we've made it all up, and we're goin' to pull together."

"But how is it she was goin' to marry me when she was already tied to you?" Thirsty asked.

"'Cause she read in the paper that I'd bin lynched," Splinter explained. "A newspaper cuss was here on the day I plugged the Greaser, an' heard the committee plannin' to string me up. He went afore the affair came off, but he wrote up my death all the same. Durned if he did n't even put in my last words!"

Thirsty turned away in despair.

"It's on us, gents!" Deuce exclaimed.

"You'd do better next time," Splinter volunteered, "to make sure afore you attack a lady's character, or accuse a man who's done so much fur this town of scandalizin' it!"

The crowd squirmed beneath his reproach, and its leading members, desirous of appeasing him, held a hurried consultation.

"Splinter," said Deuce, withdrawing from the group, "would it make things right if we agreed to let you be a pris'ner here forever?"

"Pris'ner!" Splinter cried in fine scorn. "D'ye think I'd let Maria live here as a pris'ner's wife? I've got more pride!"

"Then yo're not goin' to live here?" Thirsty cried eagerly.

Splinter hedged. "Well, not on those terms," he drawled.

The group held another conference. "S'pose we make you constable o' High Hope, and let this be yore quarters?"

Splinter bowed condescendingly. "I call that handsome!" he said, shaking hands all around.

"An' now," Gila suggested, "let's licker! I'm drier'n blazes!"

"Not to-night," Splinter said, to the expectant crowd's utter astonishment. "Maria's room's over the bar. She's a White Ribboner! I would n't have her know I kept a bar fur the world. I had to steer her round the back way to keep her from seein' my beer sign."

"D'ye mean to say yo're goin' to close the bar!" exploded Thirsty.

"Don't all look so skeered," Splinter said. "I've decided to earn my livin' in a cleaner way, but I ain't goin' back on you gents." He pondered a moment; then he eyed Thirsty benevolently. "You and me've been at each others' throats long enough," he said to that worthy. "What these gents have done comes hard on you, but I'm goin' to make it right. If you come up here early to-morrow and get the stuff out afore Maria knows it, you kin have it to set up bizness at Boston's old stand."

Forgetting his injured ankle in his joy, Thirsty leaped forward and clasped Splinter in a bear hug. "Ain't you the square one!" he bawled.

Gila, whose thought had remained in the present, interrupted the felicities. "My throat's on fire, Splinter! Can't we sneak in easy an' git just one drink all around?"

"I—I guess you kin!" Splinter agreed uneasily, feeling for the bar-room key. Some one near him uttered a low warning; turning, he saw that his wife had entered the room.

"They wanted to go back in the kitchen fur a drink o' water, Maria," he stammered, neglecting in his confusion to introduce his spouse, "but I feared the squeakin' o' the pump would disturb you."

The little woman in the doorway gazed at him with gentle disapproval. "You should n't let your regard for me make you inhospitable, Horatio, especially when the throat of one of your guests is on fire. If your friends will excuse me a moment, I'll bring iced tea." She left the room quickly.

"Iced tea!" Thirsty gasped. "Iced tea!" his companions echoed. They stared at each other aghast. Then, with one impulse, they turned and filed on tiptoe out into the open.

Splinter's inclination was to laugh, but the thought that he must invent an excuse for his friends' sudden departure checked him. When he was about at his wits' end, they reappeared.

"Splinter, she'd feel mighty bad not to find us, would n't she?" Deuce queried.

"T would bust her heart!" Splinter solemnly returned.

"Then we'll take the dose," Deuce said resignedly. "High Hope's got to treat its fust female horspital!"

The party lived nobly up to this high resolve. Deuce, as he was served, raised his glass and proposed "The fust lady o' High Hope! God bless her!" His companions lifted theirs. "The fust lady o' High Hope! God bless her!" they echoed. Then, unflinchingly, without a grimace, they drank.



THE PÆAN OF THE POPPIES

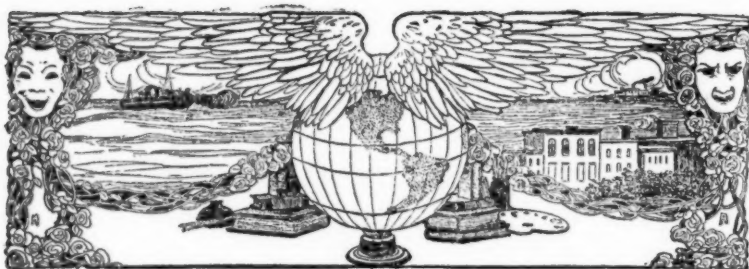
BY HERMAN SCHEFFAUER

S PRENT from the hands of Spring,
The golden seed is falling
O'er meadows loud with light
And hills that harvest bring
When warm the winds go calling
The poppies up from night,
Restoring Earth her sight.

The mountains sway with flame
Where the frail glories tremble,—
Fair, fallen stars of fire!
The valleys green acclaim
The legions that assemble
In royal robe and tire,
With timbrel, shawm, and quire.

Stained with the ruby's wine,
Gilt by the sunset lustre,
Swung by the sunset breeze,—
So do their beakers shine,
So flare their crowns in clusters,
So bow across the leas
Like beacons o'er the seas.

Afar in darker lands
I feel their kisses burning
As sweet, uncertain lips,
As faint, unhindered hands
Are felt by exiles yearning
On shores when tears eclipse
The wan and westering ships.



WAYS OF THE HOUR

A DEPARTMENT OF CURRENT COMMENT AND
CRITICISM—SANE, STIMULATING, OPTIMISTIC

A NEW YEAR'S THOUGHT

THERE is no more pathetic case of self-conviction than the annual summing up of memory before the tribunal of hope at the close of the year. Taking an honest inventory of stock and sales, what one of us is not desperately in debt, wickedly reckless and extravagant of others' confidence and trust, worthy of banishment from deluded society, quite misplaced and falsely estimated? There are novelists who would fain be painters, actors who yearn for the author's name, soldiers who know that they should have studied medicine, nay, there are even lawyers of brilliant reputation who would gladly exchange lots with the starved teacher, the discouraged clergyman, the obscure poet. Out of the very depths of our restlessness and discontent comes nature's fairest vision, the unuttered and unutterable word of our secret powers. Every vivid, sensate thing in creation is conscious of possible, unexpressed power; this consciousness it is which gives zest to life. And one of the conditions of effective existence is the simultaneous desire to energize our powers. We need no prophet to make us sure that just the "bundle of relations" which produced this particular entity have never been coördinated for another and will never again be repeated by infinitely experimenting nature. We are rightly indignant, then, with the poor return we are making upon her investment. Power and the unquenchable desire to express that power in distinct, original, adequate terms, nature implanted at birth in each of us. Small wonder that we face the calendar with the sting of disappointment and the scourge of

doubt. Small wonder that the mother of six boys cannot see why she was put into this wilderness of nameless heroisms, or that the poet should be forever doomed to watch the flaming sword that bars him from the garden of unurged achievement. Somewhere we shall order this wretched matter better. Some time we shall love the thing we are doing. To earn one's bread by the sweat of one's brow and to deserve one's butter by a sweet imagination is possible for every man or woman who knows the meaning of the vocation that commands and the avocation that invites. Year by year to widen the paths of possible, beautiful expression—that is the meaning of growth and of its painful interims.

PHILIP BECKER GOETZ

LEGISLATIVE PAY

AN election to Congress will be regarded henceforward as much more desirable than ever before, thanks to the recent increase of the salaries of Members by fifty per cent. Seven thousand five hundred dollars a year is an income large enough to furnish a strong attraction, independently of the glory to be gained through the exercise of an opportunity to legislate for the nation.

As a matter of fact, there was small justice in the plea that five thousand dollars was not an adequate salary for a Congressman—a fact which becomes manifest when it is considered that the work required extends over only six months in the year, the balance of the twelvemonth being so much leisure available for utilization in other activities. Thus, for example, the lawyers in the House of Representatives devote their time between sessions, as a rule, to the practice of their profession.

In urging the passage of the bill to raise Congressional salaries, one argument used was that Washington was an expensive place to live in. The truth is, however, that such is very far from being the case. Apparently, the capital city has acquired this reputation through the circumstances that people are constantly going thither on holiday-making trips from all parts of the country. When they get home, they count the cost, and say, "Goodness me! what an expensive place Washington is!" But such trips always do cost a great deal of money, no matter where one goes, and certainly food costs no more in Washington than elsewhere, while rents are extraordinarily low—handsome houses in the fashionable section being easily obtainable for fifty dollars a month—and the wages of servants are a third less than in Philadelphia or New York.

There is a widespread popular impression to the effect that Congressmen are obliged to keep up a fashionable position in Washington. Nothing, however, could be further from the truth. Senators and their

families are "somebody," if they choose to be, and happen to have money to spend in entertaining; but members of the House, as a rule, are not encountered in the fashionable drawing-rooms of the capital. Most of them live in very modest quarters in hotels, and to scenes of social festivity they are strangers, unless it be a reception at the White House. There are a few Representatives who are conspicuous in the society of Washington, but the fact has nothing to do with the circumstance that they are in Congress.

The necessary expenses of Congressmen are cut down to a minimum. Not long ago each Representative was provided by the nation with a secretary, at one hundred dollars a month; and at the present time two great apartment houses are in process of erection, at a cost of five million dollars, one for the Senate and the other for the House, in which luxurious private rooms will be set aside for the use of every legislator.

RENÉ BACHE

THE PROBLEM OF CUBA

THE future of the island of Cuba is a question which will probably give rise to much headache in Washington; for the time must come, and come soon, when the American people will be called on to decide what their policy in respect to Cuba is going to be.

When Estrada Palmas was appointed President, there seemed reason to think that the natives were in a condition to govern themselves and to pay a certain amount of respect to the natural laws of morality and justice. But Cuban self-government soon resolved itself into a scramble for the Treasury and the prosecution of private vengeance.

The insurrection of last year was the final straw which led to intervention on the part of the United States, and the installation of the existing provisional government under Mr. Magoon.

The bloodshed, persecution, and graft which characterized the first presidency will be a feature of the second also if the United States troops are withdrawn. But worse will follow. The Liberals are divided among themselves. The followers of General Gomez are bitter enemies of the supporters of Dr. Zayas. If Gomez becomes President, the Zayists will rise against him. If Zayas heads the poll, the Miguelistas will take to the woods. If a third party is elected, they are quite likely to unite against him.

Now, an insurrection in Cuba is not serious as regards killed and wounded, but it is most serious in respect to the security of property. A very small uprising can cause an almost incredible amount of damage, and it is almost impossible to catch the insurgents, who know the woods

thoroughly and have steadfast friends among the country people. All the American interests in this island, valued at many million dollars, will be jeopardized. The blood shed in two interventions, the millions spent in war, will have been expended in vain unless the government at Washington decides to keep the island.

Again, the position of the black race in Cuba must be considered. They form the large majority of the population and could easily put an army of fifty thousand fighting men into the field. At present there is no state where the negro is so well treated as in Cuba; but a black political party has been formed, at present small in numbers, whose avowed object is to obtain an even better condition than they enjoy now. Further, they do not scruple to announce that what they do not obtain by political pressure they will obtain by force. A negro insurrection and perhaps triumph in Cuba would be disastrous for the Southern States, and it behooves the authorities at Washington to keep a stern eye on this movement. Racial troubles would very soon end the possibility of a prosperous Cuba.

The splendid trade which has been built up between the island and the continent can continue only under American rule.

The currency question, the present hindrance (outside politics) to commercial prosperity, must eventually be solved by the adoption of the dollar. The tobacco-workers have gained their strike for American money, many of the biggest sugar plantations pay in that coin, and the men on the other plantations are clamoring for it. In the province of Santiago it is the only recognized coinage.

But a still more important factor remains. In a few years American enterprise and American labor will have completed the Panama Canal, the greatest engineering triumph of the century. What is the relationship of Cuba to the Panama Canal? Since earliest times Havana has been recognized as the key of the Eastern and Western Worlds. Cuba, with its many splendid bays and harbors, will be the key to the Panama Canal.

The American people must not be content to build this great waterway and leave Cuba in hostile or even in neutral hands. The Suez Canal is the vital link in the British Empire, and the Panama Canal will surely prove no less important to America. Not only for its commercial position as the shipping exchange of the Atlantic and the Pacific will Havana be recognized, but far more as the strategic centre of the United States's naval policy.

What the American people must decide, then, is to make the second occupation of Cuba permanent, either by the suppression of the republic and the maintenance of an American government or by the appointment of an American governor with the power of veto, of American supervisors in all departments, and the maintenance of an American

garrison. The Cubans require government, good and plenty. They cannot get it among themselves; they must have it sooner or later from Washington.

AN ENGLISH RESIDENT

ESPERANTO

ESPERANTISTS are surely a bloodthirsty lot. They would like to fill the graves of a large number of dead languages. In this respect they are not unlike, although more candidly ambitious than, every nation on the globe, each of which thinks its own language by all odds the best, and cherishes the hope, more or less forlorn, that its own tongue will some day become the universal world language.

One of the chief claims for Esperanto is that it is easily understood and easily learned. That is so, provided you are a college graduate and have studied Latin, Greek, French, German, and a few other languages. The rest of the people, comprising probably as much as ninety per cent. of the population, have about as much chance with Esperanto as a horse doctor in a garage. In thirty minutes the college professor can learn more about theoretical Esperanto than he can ever find in books about the practical slang that passes current on the lower East Side of New York. And don't forget that this slang is expressive. The inhabitants of the Bowery understand one another. They lose no time in turning beautiful diplomatic phrases. With them expression follows concept, quick as a flash.

There is no doubt that Esperanto is an elegant and ingenious contrivance to those who are able to appreciate it, but, after all, its success or failure turns upon the fundamental question whether a language can be fabricated and instituted by statute or otherwise formally, or necessarily confined by its nature to the "jest growed" Topsy class. A little of both perhaps, with a preponderance in favor of the latter. If Esperanto succeeds in keeping some well-intentioned people out of mischief, it will have served a good purpose.

ELLIS O. JONES



A PARTING

BY FRANCIS MARQUETTE

KEEP me in your fairest thoughts, my fair;
 Day shall be deep when that we meet again—
 In some far valley of the timeless air—
 Unto that peace this pain shall be a stair.



A WOMAN'S REASON

Mr. Peter Penson was not only very much in love with Miss Mabel Wentworth, but very anxious to tell her so. He had met her at a seaside resort, and the time and the place and the extraordinary beauty of the young lady had done their fatal work. But though he had called several times he had never found her alone.

It therefore became necessary for him to adopt an expedient—and one which would cost as little as possible; for Mr. Peter Penson was extremely cautious in expenditure.

Miss Mabel's home was not far from the park. What could be more effective for his purpose than a walk in that verdant locality?

"Will you," he managed to whisper one evening, "take a walk with me in the park to-morrow afternoon?"

"What for?" replied Miss Mabel in astonishment. The idea of walking in a park had never occurred to her since she had become a young lady. No one ever did it.

Peter blushed. The thought had never occurred to *him* that there would be any difficulty.

"Why," he stammered, "there was something I wanted to say to you, and——"

"Can't you say it here?"

"Hardly. We may be interrupted at any moment."

Suddenly Mabel smiled. An idea came to her.

"I tell you what," she said. "Let us take luncheon at the Switzerland. It's quite proper, you know. And then——"

Peter shuddered as he thought that the Switzerland was the most expensive place in town.

"And then," continued Mabel, "we might go to the matinée. Let's see. I should so like to see 'The Bird's Nest.' They say it's fine. You can talk to me between the acts."

Walnuts and Wine

"But," objected Peter, "others would hear us."

"Very well, then. We might walk through the park. It will be dusk by that time. Shall I expect you to-morrow?"

Peter replied, "Yes," but he did it with a heavy heart.

"And be sure," was Mabel's parting injunction, "to reserve a table at the Switzerland—and you'd better get the seats at once. I never like anything outside of the tenth row. And, oh, Mr. Penson, pardon me for speaking of it, but it might rain. In which case I should prefer an electric cab."

Peter that night prayed that it would be pleasant the next day. But, alas! Providence was not with him. It did rain. And how it rained!

Promptly at twelve o'clock, however, he and his electric cab were at the door of Mabel's house. And in twenty minutes more they were seated in the front window of the Switzerland restaurant.

Miss Mabel took up the card with the eye of an expert, and before Peter had time to breathe she had ordered nearly twenty dollars' worth of unsubstantial food.

He paid the bill, however, and off to the *matinée* they went. Still it rained.

"I am afraid," said Peter, as they came out, "that we can't have that walk in the park."

"What's the matter with the cab?" asked Mabel.

In truth, Peter had so firmly fastened his mind on the park that it had never occurred to him he could propose anywhere else. Besides, a cab seemed so much more expensive. And yet this was only apparent.

"You are right!" he exclaimed.

They entered the cab. He turned to her.

"Mabel dear," he said, "I love you. Will you be mine?"

Mabel did not reply immediately, and the cab was almost at her door before she did.

"No," she said at last.

"But——"

"I am sorry, but I never can be yours. Believe me, it is impossible. Say no more about it."

The cab stopped. They both got out. Peter paid the driver and walked up the steps.

"Why won't you have me?" he asked.

In reply, Mabel smiled upon him benevolently.

"Because, Peter," she said, "you are altogether too extravagant."

Thomas L. Masson

Walnuts and Wine

GOING UP!

By Robert T. Hardy

"An ounce of butter, madam?"

The grocer said, and then,

"Two dollars, please," as he wrapped it up—

For this was 1910.

SO FAR, SO GOOD

William H. Crane, the actor, tells of two impecunious players who, during a period of enforced "liberty," were compelled to dine at cheap table d'hôte restaurants on the East Side. One evening, during each course of such a dinner, one of the actors kept saying:

"Honest, Frank, is n't a good dinner? Is n't it good? Did you ever eat a better dinner in your life for thirty-five cents?"

Frank was silent until the end of the fifth course, when his friend repeated his formula. Then, with a commendable affectation of enthusiasm, Frank answered:

"A splendid dinner, old man! A splendid dinner! Let's have another."

Fenimore Martin

CAUSE FOR ENVY

Mistress: "Many a married woman envies you your place here as cook for us, Bridget."

Cook: "Yes 'm—'cause I can leave and they can't."

C. A. Bolton

CAUSE AND EFFECT

Mother: "Why are you crying, Teddie, dear?"

Teddie: "'Cause brudder slapped me."

Mother: "What did he slap you for?"

Teddie: "Cryin'."

Harrold Skinner

MERELY ODOROUS

By Ellis O. Jones

There was a young man who said, "Ain't Rockefeller's donations got taint?"

Said a man in the street,

Who was less indiscreet,

"They may smell of oil, but 'tain't taint,"

Walnuts and Wine

THINKLETS

Boarding-house milk is like the quality of mercy—not strained.

The man who has no scruples does not hesitate to take a dram.

After a ride on the water-wagon a mint-julep comes as a relief—a kind of bar-relief.

John E. Rosser

NO MISTAKE

A New York produce commission house which prides itself on filling all orders correctly received a letter from a New Jersey customer recently, saying:

GENTLEMEN:

This is the first time we ever knew you to make a mistake in our order. You are well aware that we buy the very best country eggs. The last you sent are too poor for our trade. What shall we do with them?

The fair fame of the house for never making an error seemed to be at stake, but the bright mind of the junior partner found a way out of it. He wrote:

GENTLEMEN:

We are sorry to hear that our last shipment did not suit you. There was, however, no mistake on our part. We have looked up your original order and find that it reads as follows: "Rush 50 crates eggs. We want them bad."

Henry H. Day

OF HER OWN ACCORD

The day the doctor called to treat little Kitty for a slight ailment, it was only by the most persistent persuasion that he succeeded in getting the child to show him her tongue.

A few days subsequent to this the child said to her mother, "Ma, the doctor don't have to tease me to obey him any more!"

"Why not?"

"'Cause every time I see him going by the house now, I stick my tongue out at him!"

Charles C. Mullin

ACCOUNTED FOR

Dyer: "I never saw such a spiritless man."

Ryer: "That 's because he 's a prohibitionist."

L. B. Coley

Walnuts and Wine

ATTENDING A CHAUTAUQUA

Down in Georgia the citizens of a thriving town of about six thousand people arranged for a Chautauqua Assembly last summer. They held the meetings in a big tent about a mile from the town, and the attendance was large from the first day. An enterprising circus man heard of the large crowds, and landed in the town on the second day of the Chautauqua with a steam merry-go-round which he located about half-way between the town and the Chautauqua grounds.

Along in the afternoon a young man from the country districts was accosted by a citizen of the town.

"Well, Ezry, I suppose you are in to the Chautauqua."

"I shore am. Jist come from thar now."

"How 'd you like it?" asked the townsman.

"Fine ez a fiddle! I rode on the durn thing nine times!"

Louis J. Alber



BUSINESS

By Hugh Miller

In the mythical land of Bagoo
Is a rather remarkable zoo,
And the animals there
Came from 'most everywhere,
Because they were stuck on Bagoo.

In this somewhat remarkable zoo
Of the mythical land of Bagoo,
There 's a picturesque monk
Who 's worth quite a chunk
Of money and real estate, too.

Now, the story that 's here told to you,
Is compiled from the local "Who 's Who,"
A society sheet
Quite daring and neat,
And sold in the zoo of Bagoo.

It appears that the monk saw a chance
His fortune to greatly enhance,
So he opened a track
And wired rapidly back,
For a team of dirigible ants.

Walnuts and Wine

Now, the ants were invited at once
To race for His Dullness the Dunce,
And the sports of Bagoo,
With a joyful "Whiroo!"
In betting did all the old stunts.

Then the monk slipped a laugh in his hair
And sneered at the crowd gathered there;
With a subsidized few
Took the money in view,
And said, "There 's no doubt that it 's fair."

The ants ran the race, it is true,
And the rest will be plain, then, to you.
For the one that was "slow,"
Took the "fast" one in tow,
And with it the sports of Bagoo.

The monk had no right to complain,
So he did n't take steps to explain
How he doled out the dope
And won in a lope,
By the use of a business-like brain.

SUBTLE, YET CLEAR

Governor Vardaman, of Mississippi, tells of a colored citizen of that State who gave a justice of the peace a big fat 'possum as wedding fee.

A year after, the justice, on meeting the darky, asked:
"Joe, how do you like married life?"

"Well, sah," answered Joe ruefully, "all I kin say is—I wish I'd eat dat 'possum."
Taylor Edwards

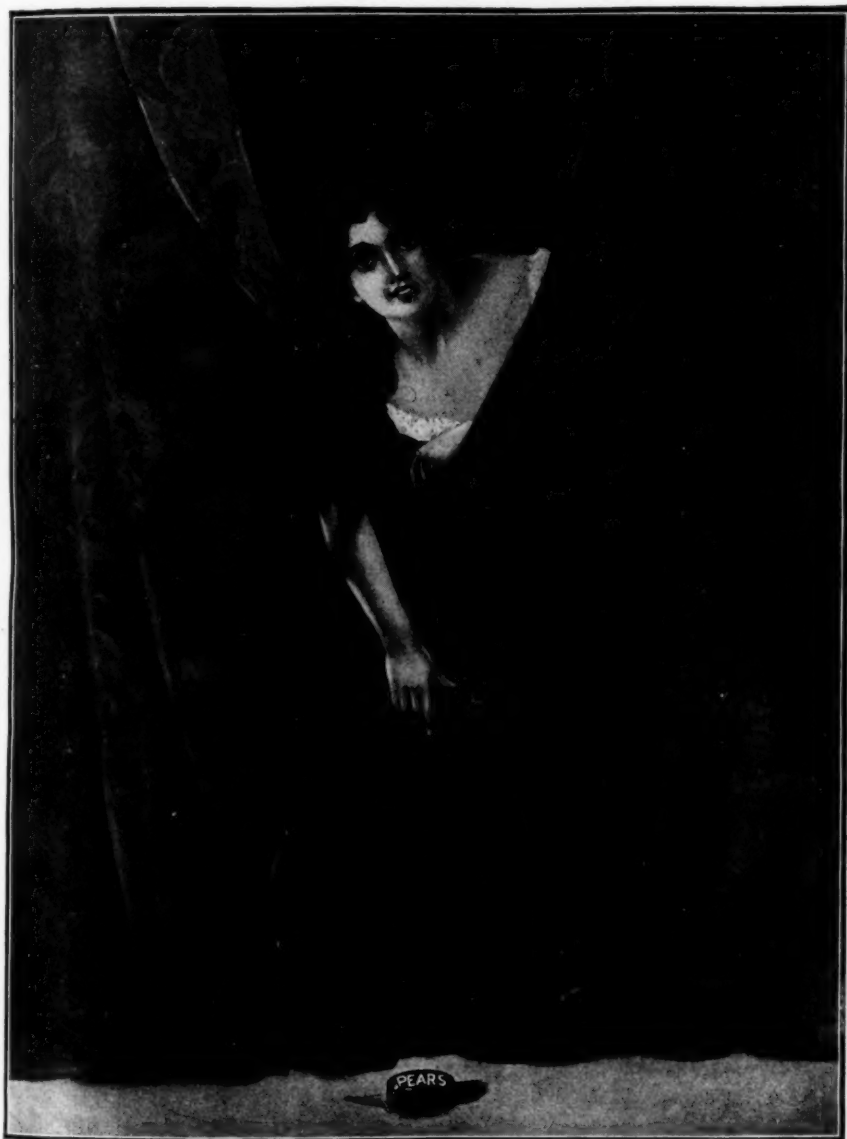
DIFFERENT ZONES

While giving a geography lesson, a teacher called upon a precocious youngster named Johnny to tell what he could about "zones." Johnny responded as follows: "There are two kinds of zones, masculine and feminine. The masculine zones are temperate and intemperate, while the feminine zones are both horrid and frigid."

L. W. R.

Walnuts and Wine

Please hand me that!



"Pears"

OF ALL SCENTED SOAPS PEARS' OTTO OF ROSE IS THE BEST.

"All rights secured."

In writing to advertisers, kindly mention LIPPINCOTT'S.

Walnuts and Wine

A LUCKY MISS

Two Englishmen bound West on a tour stopped over a few hours in Chicago recently, and during the interval dropped into one of the vaudeville theatres. Shortly after they entered, a knife-throwing team began its turn, the man sticking knives in a decorative border around the head and arms of his feminine partner.

After a few minutes' uneasiness one of the Englishmen turned to the other and said:

"Come, let's get out of this bally hole."

"Cahn't you wait to see it through?"

"Cahn't I wait? I should sye not. 'E's 'ad ten chawnces, and 'e's missed 'er every time."

Barton Manbert



SOME COMMON PHRASES EXPLAINED

"Pity is akin to love." And a mighty poor relation.

"Every man has his price." Excepting always those who give themselves away.

"A complication of diseases." What a man dies of when the doctors don't know.

"Riches have wings." But the millionaires' sons usually open the cage doors.

"Ignorance is bliss." It must be, judging from the happy expressions of the majority.

"Love laughs at locksmiths." With a milliner, grocer, and ice-man, however, he is usually serious.

"Truth is stranger than fiction." Or does it only seem so because we have less chance to get well acquainted with it?

Warwick James Price



PREJUDICE

"Robert, this spelling paper is very poor," complained the small boy's teacher. "Nearly every word is marked wrong."

"It would n't have been so bad," protested Robert, "but Annie corrected my paper, and she's mad at me, and for every little letter that I got wrong, she crossed out the whole word."

Clara M. Taber

Walnuts and Wine



In the Scottish Highlands

"A friend and I were cycling through Scotland this summer. We wheeled from Glasgow to the village of Luss, on Loch Lomond. It was raining copiously.

"Up a mountain road against the driving storm we pushed our wheels. Arrived at Stronachlachar we found the steamer we intended to take across Loch Katrine—was gone!

"We were compelled to go back 'overland' on our wheels, and on the road became hungry as bears. No shelter was near.

"Down we sat on a streaming rock and ate Grape-Nuts. Fortunately I had bought a package at Glasgow 'against a rainy day'—and here it was! We ate two-thirds of it and in the strength of that meal pushed our wheels over the humpty-bumpy road in the rain 17 miles to Aberfoyle, and at the end felt no sense of 'goneness' but were fresh as larks. I cannot imagine how we could have endured the journey without

"Grape-Nuts"

"There's a Reason."

Postum Cereal Co., Limited, Battle Creek, Mich.

In writing to advertisers, kindly mention LIPPINCOTT'S.

Walnuts and Wine

GETTING ROUND A DIFFICULTY

The late Charles Whitney of Biddeford, Maine, was the greatest wit and joker in his part of the country. One evening he and a friend named Bagley started to drive a wagon to Portland, some fifteen miles distant. When they arrived in Scarborough it became dark and foggy. Seeing a guide-board in the corner of the fence, Whitney got out, climbed up on the wall, lighted a match, and read on the board, "Portland 6 miles." They rode about an hour longer, and once more saw a guide-board. Whitney again got out, climbed on the fence, lighted a match, and read, "Portland 6 miles."

Then he said: "Bagley, get out and find me a rock."

"How big?" asked Bagley.

"About as big as your two fists."

"What do you want it for?"

"Well," drawled Whitney, "I'm going to knock this guide-board off and take it with us, so we'll know where we are. I'm tired of getting out and climbing this wall every hour to find out."

Lewis A. Wentworth

YE MAIDEN MARINER

By Edwin L. Sabin

She's much afraid of waves, alack;

Yet though the night be dark above,

She's always ready in a smack

To launch upon the sea of love.

THE BETTER PART OF VALOR

A lady took her four-year-old son to the family dentist to have his teeth attended to. The dentist found a small cavity, so the lady seated herself in the chair, took Master Tom on her lap, and the operation began. The burr had no sooner touched the tooth than the child began to scream. At the end of fifteen minutes, when the mother released her hold upon the child, she was deathly pale, while the dentist wiped great beads of perspiration from his brow. Tom, however, fairly swaggered across the room.

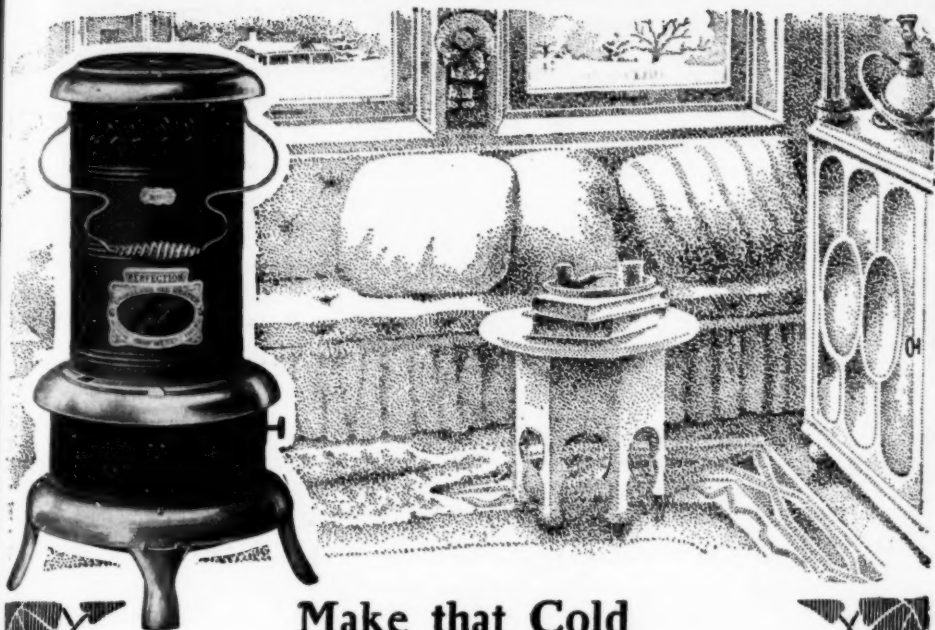
"That did n't hurt," he boasted, with a broad smile.

"Then, why did you scream so?" cried the exasperated mother.

"Because I was afraid it was going to," explained Tom.

Clara M. Taber

Walnuts and Wine



Make that Cold Room a Cozy Den

In nearly every house there is one room that is extremely hard to heat—it is therefore practically closed for the winter. This room can be made the coziest room in the house with no trouble by the use of the

PERFECTION Oil Heater

(Equipped with Smokeless Device)

This heater gives intense heat, with no smoke, no smell. Turn it as high as you can to light it, as low as you can to extinguish it. Easy to clean, easily carried from room to room. Nickel or Japan finish. Every heater guaranteed.

The **Rayo** Lamp is the best lamp for all-round household purposes. Gives a clear, steady light. Made of brass throughout and nickel plated. Equipped with the latest improved central draft burner. Handsome—simple—satisfactory. Every lamp guaranteed.

If you cannot get heater and lamp at your dealer's, write to our nearest agency.

STANDARD OIL COMPANY
(Incorporated)



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Walnuts and Wine

RUMOR

Rumor is a common noun, singular and feminine gender—except when it is used by stock gamblers to influence the market or by statesmen to influence politics.

Necessity is the grandmother of Rumor, because Rumor is the child of Invention. Considered separately, its forebears are feminine idlebodies and masculine busybodies.

The physical properties of Rumor are unique and interesting. It is more potent than fact, attains to a greater velocity than electricity, cannot be reduced to a syllogism, feeds on emotion, sleeps with one eye open, gathers strength with age, and dies of punctured dropsy.

Rumor is like Santa Claus. We know its general tendencies, but not its specific origin. All we know of rumor is from hearsay. No one has ever been arrested for stealing it, as the original owner is always unwilling to claim it.

Rumor is predatory. Its chief quarries are lovers (married or single), preachers, social leaders, policemen, politicians, and people. Its bitterest foe is Rumor. Therefore Rumor should always be treated homeopathically. Its motto is, *relato refero ipsissimis verbis*, which ought to mean: "Don't believe half you hear, and forget the other half."

Ellis O. Jones

WHY NOT?

Dyer: "He's crazy on the subject of aerial navigation."

Ryer: "A balloonic, eh?"

L. B. Coley

A LENTEN SACRIFICE

Margie is six years old, and her family are Presbyterians. Some of Margie's little friends are Episcopalians, and Margie was much impressed with the idea of their lenten sacrifices. This year on Ash Wednesday she announced that she would eat no candy for forty days.

A few hours later some one saw Margie with a large peppermint stick in one hand.

"Why, Margie," said her friend, "I thought you had given up candy for Lent."

"I did mean to," admitted Margie, "but I've changed my mind. I'm giving up profane language."

Louise Driscoll

Walnuts and Wine

MENNEN'S

Borated Talcum
TOILET POWDER



As a Champion

protector of the skin and complexion of particular men and women, first comes

MENNEN'S BORATED TALCUM TOILET POWDER

a safe and pure healing and protective powder, the merits of which have been recognized and commended by the medical profession for many years. Winter winds have no ill effects where **Mennen's** is used daily, after **shaving** and after **bathing**. In the nursery it is indispensable.

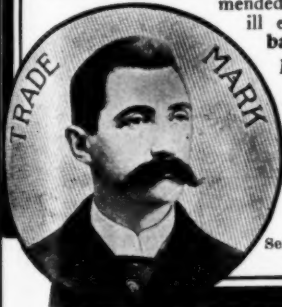
For your protection—put up in **non-refillable** boxes—the "**box that lox.**" If **MENNEN'S** face is on the cover it's **genuine** and a **guarantee of purity**. Guaranteed under the Food and Drugs Act, June 30th, 1906. Serial No. 1542.

Sold everywhere, or by mail 25 cents. **Sample Free.**

Gerhard Mennen Co., Orange St., Newark, N. J.

Try **MENNEN'S Violet (Borated) Talcum Toilet Powder**.
It has the scent of fresh-cut Parma Violets.

Sent **FREE**, for 2-cent stamp to pay postage, one set **MENNEN'S Bridge Whist** Talles, enough for six tables.



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Walnuts and Wine

PTHE PTERRIBLE PFATE OF PFRANK PFEFFER

By E. F. Moberly

Frank Pfeffer, of Titusville, Texas, died of ptomaine poisoning last Thursday.—*Newspaper Item.*

Pfrank Pfeffer, down in Ptitusville,
Once pthought pthat he would like pto fill
Himself with nice ptinned ptongue.
A corner grocery he sought,
And pthere ptwo ptins of ptongue he bought;
Of human ills he had no pthought,
For he was blithe and young.

With eager hands he oped a can,
And into it his pfingers ran,
Pfor he was in great haste.
Great gobs of ptongue Pfrank Pfeffer ate,
Not dreaming pthat he ptempted pfate.
At every gulp he pthought it great.
A crumb he did not waste.

He ate pthe contents of each ptin,
Pthen suddenly he pfelt within
An awful shooting pain.
His inner works were paralyzed.
Pthe doctor came and ptheorized.
Ptoo late poor Pfeffer realized
Pthe ptongue contained ptomaine.

A stomach pump pthe doctor ptried;
Pthe ptomaine his attempts defied,
And pto poor Pfrank it clung.
Alas, Pfrank Pfeffer could not stay;
Pthose -ptins of ptongue put him away.
By other ptongues—not ptinned—next day
His requiem was sung.

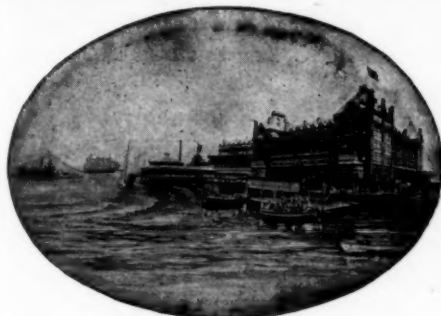
FIGURING TEACHER'S BIRTHDAY

Teacher: "Mary, if my given age is thirty years, how would you find my birthday.

Mary, promptly: "Add five to the given age and subtract the result from 1907!"

Charles C. Mullin

THE YEAR-ROUND RESORT OF AMERICA



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Sitting-room, bed-room, and bath, from	\$8.00 per day

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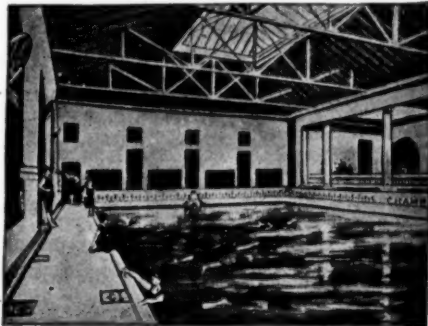
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Walnuts and Wine

THE LAUGH NOT ON HIM

With a scowling brow the irate vaudeville agent awaited the next applicant, who was not long in coming. A long, lanky individual, with more hair than was absolutely necessary and a countenance that was not a bit cheerful, came to his desk, and in funereal tones said, "Good day, sir."

"Well, what do *you* want?" was the unpromising reply.

"I need a job just now about as much as anything else," answered the lean person.

"Ever had any experience?"

"Oh, indeed, I have been with——"

"Chop it short. I know you've been with all the big stars from Hamlet to omelet," interposed the agently shortly. "That does n't cut any freeze with me. What's your line?"

"I—I—I'm a—a—a comedian," was the faint reply.

"Well, then, make me laugh," demanded the agent, with a snarl.

W. Dayton Wegefarth

A NATURE FAKER

By E. F. Moberly

The tadpole is a curious beast,

A paradox complete;

For he is but four inches long,

When he has grown four feet.

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY'S ANSWER

Booth Tarkington tells of an inquisitive Indianapolis woman who was talking with James Whitcomb Riley about the inadequate compensation to poets.

"But you, Mr. Riley," observed the lady,—"*surely* you have no cause for complaint! On the contrary, you must be a rich man by now. Why, I understand you're paid a dollar a word for all you write."

"Yes, ma'am," said Riley gravely; "but sometimes I sit all day without being able to think of a single word."

Howard Morse

INEXPRESSIBLE

Doctor: "Let me see your tongue."

Patient: "Oh, doctor, no tongue can tell how sick I feel."

Abigail Robinson

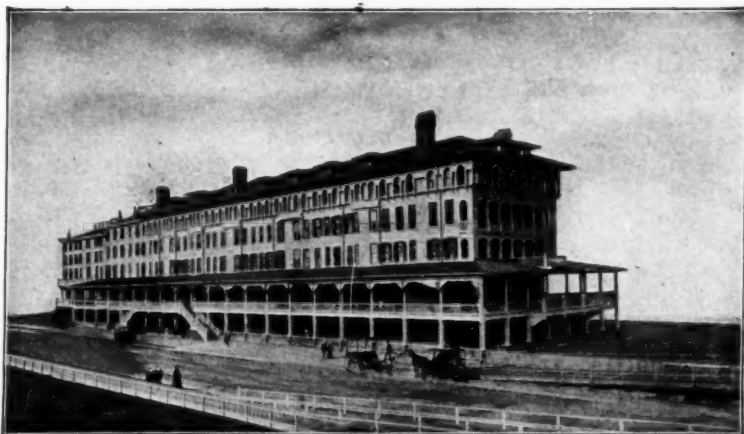
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ONLY A FEW LEFT

When the late Dr. Alexander Brown was gathering material for his book, "The Cabells and their Kin," he found in Nelson county, Virginia, a negro—" 'mos' a hunderd year ole"—who had belonged to Ann, widow of Colonel William Cabell, of Union Hill.

Mrs. Cabell had been noted for her piety, and the negro was telling of it:

"My Mistis—she sure was 'ligious, she was! She was de top uv de pot here, and she is dat now whar she gone to glory." Confidentially—"I ain't niver know but two pussons who was surely sanctified."

"Who were they?" asked the amused historian.

"*Me and Miss Ann.*"

Elizabeth Henry Lyons



OH, WOMAN!

By E. D. Pierson

Her graceful head was bowed with grief—

She strove to hide her tears

And trembled like an aspen leaf,

Yet young was she in years.

The sculptor's heart with pity bled

Toward one so charged with woe.

Her face a saddened splendor shed

Around the studio.

"Build me," she said, "a stately fane,

With Doric columns decked,

Fitting a life without a stain——"

A sob her utterance checked.

"Be it of snowy marble pure,

As his white soul now flown.

With granite base that shall endure

Till I have claimed mine own!"

She moved away, then paused and turned,

Her eyes like shining lamps.

"Do you"—with eager look that burned—

"Do you give trading stamps?"

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DOES it not seem strange to you that a dealer who tries to substitute, when you ask for an advertised article, should assume that you are not capable of spending your own money? Show him that you are by insisting on getting what you ask for and refusing any substitute. Substitutes pay him a larger profit, otherwise he would give you what you ask for, without question. Manufacturers of advertised articles produce large quantities, being enabled thereby to manufacture cheaply and furnish the public with high-grade goods at the price of inferior substitutes.

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Walnuts and Wine

DRIVING A GOOD BARGAIN

The barber's small son was in the habit of playing around his father's shop, and he was always keenly interested in the patrons. Many a stray penny found its way into the little chubby hand, and sticks of gum were dropped in quite as though by accident. Judge Williams drifted into the shop the other afternoon for a hair-cut. The lad recognized the fact that the Judge was a new patron, and so was more than ordinarily interested in him. He hung at the foot of the chair and looked musingly at the Judge's bald head. Then he walked slowly to the back of the chair and surveyed the scanty fringe of hair from that point of vantage. He could contain himself no longer and burst out incredulously: "Father, do—you—get a quarter for cutting that?"

Emilie Blackmore Stapp

THE MACHI-NATION

By John E. Rosser

In other days we heard a lot
About the Ship of State;
But now, forsooth, such guff as that
Is sadly out of date.

Our nation a great auto is,
The chauffeur is T. R.;
He runs the thing with laughing gas,—
'T is named A-merry-car.

WHAT AILED THE GUN

A successful oculist of Baltimore recently put in a day or two with his new shotgun in the reed-bird marshes near Washington.

He soon noticed that when using the left-hand barrel he generally brought down the game, but that when using the other barrel he invariably missed. He finally tacked a small target to a bush near the river's bank, and fired at it several times with each barrel, in order to bring the matter to a test. The result confirmed his suspicions. One barrel was all right, or nearly so, and the other was all wrong.

"Well," said the oculist to a friend who was with him, "as nearly as I can make out, this gun has a severe case of strabismus, with strong symptoms of astigmatism."

Elgin Burroughs

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Walnuts and Wine

CORRECTED

It was on a street car in the city of Washington. Two colored women in cheaply gorgeous splendor were talking and one chanced to mention a Mr. "Jinks" in her conversation.

"Excuse me," said the other woman, "but his name is not 'Jinks.' It is Mr. 'Jenks.'"

"Oh, I sees," said the other woman complaisantly. "I sees that you puts de access on de pronoun." J. L. Harbour



NATURALLY

By Reynale Smith Pickering

"Dear Father," asked little, inquisitive Paul,
As he thought of another new question,
"When we have a pain that is funny and small,
Do they call it a *cute* indigestion?"



DID HE SEE THE POINT?

There is a bright young woman of the official set in Washington who, at a public function this winter, found herself much bored by the attentions of a fresh young man, the son of a senator from a Southwestern state.

Soon after his introduction to the young woman, the fresh young man proceeded to regale her with a story of some adventure in which he had figured as hero. His listener, a remarkably well-bred girl, was as much surprised as he could have wished, though not in the same way.

"Did you really do that?" she asked, not knowing what else to say.

"I done it!" was the proud response of the fresh young man; and he began forthwith another lengthy narrative, more startling even than the first. The young woman again politely expressed her surprise.

"Yes," said the hero; "that's what I done!"

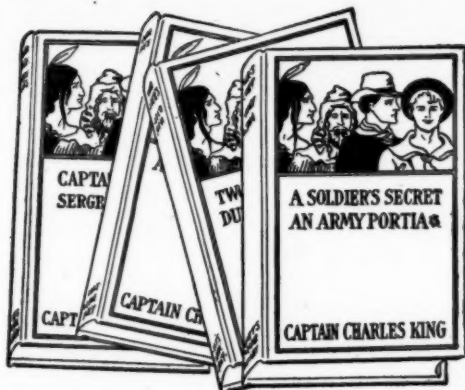
A third story followed, with another "I done it"; whereupon the girl remarked:

"Do you know, Mr. Blank, you remind me so strongly of Banquo's ghost in the play?"

"Why?"

"Don't you remember that Macbeth said to the ghost, 'Thou canst not say I did it!'" Edwin Tarrisse

Walnuts and Wine



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AGRICULTURAL HINTS

If you wish to raise a good crop of bachelor's buttons, it will first be necessary to see that there are no widow's weeds in the vicinity.

A good hay-rake has about fifteen teeth—dependent, of course, on the age of the rake.

Do not drain off your swamp land. Plant tadpoles and raise frogs, and ship the hops to Milwaukee. Here we may say that the hop is somewhat larger than the skip, though not so large as the jump.

John E. Rosser

HARDSHIPS

By Ray Thompson

"It's hard when you can't trust a friend,"

Sings a poet whose verses ring true;

But harder it is, from the standpoint of biz,

When a friend finds it hard to trust you.

A FAVORITE RETREAT

When Secretary Cortelyou left the Department of Commerce and Labor to assume direction of the Post Office Department he took with him a very dignified and gentlemanly old darky messenger.

A day or so after Mr. Cortelyou's assumption of his new dignities, the old messenger was dozing in his chair just outside the ante-room of the Postmaster General when another messenger approached him, saying:

"There's a gentleman in the room across the hall who wants to see Mr. Cortelyou."

"He can't see him," was the firm reply.

"But he says he *must* see him," persisted the second messenger.

"I don't know nothin' about dat," returned the old chap, "but I do know dat nobody kin see Mr. Cortelyou. He's jest gone to his sanctum sanitarium."

T.

VERY CONSIDERATE

Mistress: "Bridget, I hope you're not thinking at all of leaving me. I should be very lonesome without you."

Maid: "Faith, and it's not lonely ye'll be. Most-like, I'll go whin there's a houseful o' company for luncheon or dinner."

J. M. Hendrickson

Walnuts and Wine

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The Prudential Insurance Company announces that twenty-four million dollars of Ordinary life insurance was issued during the first twelve weeks that the new low-cost policy of that Company was put on the market, demonstrating the public welcome given the new policy.

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A remedy that has for over 17 years been endorsed and prescribed by physicians is certainly a safe one for the layman to use. Glycozone has proven in thousands of cases to be almost a specific for dyspepsia. It cures by removing the cause of the trouble rather than by digesting the food artificially. It reduces the inflammation in the stomach, cleanses it from any catarrhal condition, and restores that organ to its normal condition. It is absolutely as harmless as water and will surely help or cure you. A \$1.00 bottle will be sent as a demonstration to any one mentioning Lippincott's Magazine, who has not used it, and who will send 25 cents for express charges to Charles Marchand, 59 Prince Street, N. Y.

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Walnuts and Wine

A MYSTERY

William, Jr., had been cautioned by his mother not to do a number of things, too many for brief mention but all very dear to him; and he had promised. However, after dinner his mother, happening to look out of an upstairs window, saw him in the midst of a transgression and reserved the matter in her memory.

That evening she detained William by her knee, and questioned, as mothers do.

"Have you been a good boy all day, Willie?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Real good?"

"Y-yes, ma'am."

"And not done any of those things that mother told you not to do?"

"Y-y-yes, ma'am."

"Not a single one?"

William looked at her sharply, his mouth open.

"Are you me?" he demanded.

"Why, no."

"Are you God, then?"

"Certainly not."

"Then how did you know I was slidin' down that board?"

Edwin L. Sabin

LIMITED POWER

The judge of a county court in northern New York not long ago invited a friend who is a lawyer to join him for a sail on his Honor's new yacht.

The wind was brisk at the start, and it soon freshened, with the result that the small craft evinced a tendency to toss and roll in a manner most distressing to the attorney.

The judge, observing his friend's inward uneasiness, asked:

"My dear Blank, can I do anything for you?"

"Yes," replied the unhappy Blank; "I wish your honor would overrule this motion."

Edwin Tarrisse

ONE GOOD TURN, ETC.

Third-Floor Tenant: "See here! I'm one of a committee of men in this apartment, and I've called to ask you to sell your flute."

Second-Floor Tenant: "Delighted to see you. I'm one of another committee, and was about to go up and ask you if you'd sell your baby."

J. M. Hendrickson

time that he saw Mary Falconer gave him a fresh sense of her beauty and her charm.

She had suddenly come upon him one morning in the game room, where he bent with the keeper over a pile of brown and ruddy feathers of a not inconsiderable killing.

"I thought"—she had touched the pretty dangling heads with the feminine luxury of needless pity—"I fancied you more of a poet, Jimmy."

And during Mrs. Falconer's stay at the Castle Bulstrode had not shot again. The birds lay safe in their coverts. And during the week of the house party Bulstrode rather thought that fortune favored him in an especial manner; and in the hours he contrived to pass with his friend, either driving through Blankshire lanes or motoring to Penhaven Abbey, or in some one of the beautiful rooms to whose treasures of art and age they were both sensitive, Mary Falconer may have found the vigorous sportsman to be something of a poet still.

Bulstrode was rather slight of build, yet with an evident strength of body that indicated a familiarity with exercise, a healthful habit of sport and activity. His eyes, clear-sighted and strong, looked through the medium of no glass, happily and naïvely on the world. Many years before, his hair had begun to turn gray and had not nearly finished the process; it grew thickly and was quite dark about his ears and on his brow. Having gained experience and kept his youth, he was as rare and delightful as fine wine—as inspiring as spring. It was his heart, Mrs. Falconer said, that made him so—his good, gentle, generous heart!—and she should know.

His fastidiousness in point of dress and his good taste kept him close to elegance of attire. "You turn yourself out, Jimmy, on every occasion," she had said, "as if you were on the point of meeting the woman you loved." And Bulstrode had replied that such consistent hopefulness should certainly be ultimately rewarded!

He gave the impression of a man who in his youth starts out to take a long and pleasant journey and finds the route easy, the taverns agreeable, and the scenes all the guide-book promised. Midway—he had turned the page of forty—midway pausing to look back, Bulstrode saw the experiences of his travels in their sunny valley, full of goodly memories; and the future, to his sweet hopefulness, promised to be a pleasant journey to the end.

II.

THE morning after all the other guests had gone Bulstrode stood in the window of his room, his face turned toward the country. It seemed to beckon him. It called him from the park's end, where suave and smooth the curving downs met the more precise contour of the